Re-covenanting and the Apology for the Residential Schools

by

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Abstract

This thesis analyses Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Apology for the Indian Residential School System and its media coverage as a process of re-covenanting. The author demonstrates that, by splitting the totem of the identity of Canada into a sinning chapter and an essential national character, members of the totem domain were able to sacrifice the totem of Canada, which had been polluted through violations of the beliefs in equality and human rights in the residential school system though the symbolic sacrifice of the leader and representative of the people, the Prime Minister. After sacrificing the totem of the sinning nation through the humiliation of the confession of sin and apology, the totem was regenerated to its unpolluted, ideal state. This apology process constitutes a narrative of re-covenanting in line with Abrahamic and more universal religious structures, reaffirming our commitment to the values of the apology.
To those who forgive.
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1. Introduction: A New Covenant

Along with nineteen other recommendations in their 2012 interim report, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada advised that “the Government of Canada distribute a framed copy of the “Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools” for prominent public display and ongoing educational purposes” in every secondary school in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, p.29, 2012). It may seem ironic that, in a country which no longer insists on flying the flag or displaying the picture of the queen or prime minister, and where prayer is not allowed in public schools, an apology from the representative of the Canadian people to indigenous residential school survivors may become a fixture of every secondary school in the nation. However, as this essay argues, contemporary Canada is based on the civil religion of liberal democracy, which consists particularly of a devotion to human rights and equality. Stephen Harper’s (2008) apology may be on its way to becoming a defining covenant of the secular religion of Canada.

This fact has interesting implications in our post-industrial, secular nation, as, despite their modernist, a-theistic trappings, contemporary collective apologies are overshadowed by Abrahamic, notions of repentance and forgiveness, as well as more universal religious themes of sacrifice and regeneration. Scholars have pointed out that, in formerly explicitly Christian nations, the process of secularization is often not strictly de-Christianization, but rather “investing the allegorical categories of the biblical story of salvation with temporal, historical significance” (Babik, 2006, p. 376). Taking my cue from Australian sociologist Danielle Celermajer (2009), I see the collective apology as a

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1 “Abrahamic” is Derrida’s (2007) term for the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. He writes: “This tradition -- complex and differentiated, even conflictual -- is at once singular and on the way to universalization through that which a certain theatre of forgiveness puts in place or brings to light” (p. 28; cited in Henderson and Wakeham, 2009, p. 16).
prime example of this: the narrative set out by the apology and its media coverage applied the biblical concept of re-covenanted.2

While the religious tone of the narrative of public apologies is occasionally overtly stated, as in the hopes that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission would function as a “secular equivalent to the ancient Christian Rite of Reconciliation” (Daye, 2004, p.2) with Archbishop Desmond Tutu as “confessor of the nation,” (p.160)3 in the Canadian context, collective apologies, such as Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology to the former students of Indian residential schools, are couched in more secular terms such as ‘healing’ and ‘forgiveness’. While some scholars (e.g. Griswold, 2007, p. xv) argue that contemporary examinations of political apologies need not be bound within a religious framework, I argue that contemporary collective apologies, no matter how secular they might appear, are guided by deeply entrenched myths and religious narratives and, in order for their meaning and power to be fully understood, must be examined with these in mind. Particularly, collective apologies must be examined in the light of the concept of re-covenancing, as such apologies serve to re-define and renew a group’s commitment to its core beliefs.

1.1. The Concept of the Covenant

As I argue that the apology is part of a process of re-covenancing following the Burkean Order, it is necessary that I first describe what a covenant is and why I see the apology as fitting into the structure of a covenant. This will help to illuminate the similarities and differences between covenant theory and secular political practices leading to a greater understanding of the historical and religious underpinnings of secular narratives, such as the apology.

2 I take this term, and much of the theory behind it, from the work of Danielle Celermajer (2009).
3 South African human rights activist and professor Andre Du Troit was among the voices that worried that, “[a]s religious leaders and churches became increasingly involved in the commission’s work, the influence of religious style and symbolism supplanted political and human rights concerns” (quoted in Minow, 1998, p. 55). He particularly worried that those who do not agree with this framework would not want to take part in truth commissions (Minow, p. 80).
Whereas a promise refers to a vow to do or not do a specific action, a covenant is an agreement to exist in concert with a set of principles binding for all time. In Old Testament theology, covenants also differ from contracts in that contracts are secular, “private legal and economic agreements, such as conveyances, deeds and work contracts” (Tucker, 1965, p. 488), while covenants are “the means the ancient world took to extend relationships beyond the natural unity by blood” (McCarthy, cited in Niehaus, 2009, p.226). Moreover, unlike a promise or a contract, a covenant relies on an already existing relationship. As Niehaus notes, “a covenant assumes some past history of relationship (however minimal) between two parties… [and] changes the relationship between the two covenaniting parties and takes it to a different level.” A covenant between two nations may, for example, bind them to mutual assistance in the case of third party aggression, while a covenant of marriage allows a couple’s relationship to become more intimate. I see the apology for the residential schools as doing just this: taking an existing relationship to a new level. With the apology, the nation of Canada redefined its relationship with its aboriginal people, and rededicated itself to acting in harmony with the principles of human rights and equality as embodied in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). It is a means to create unity amongst not just the government and the indigenous population, nor even just the government and the citizens of Canada as a whole but also between settler/immigrant Canadians and the indigenous population.

The notion of the covenant is essential to Judeo-Christian thought. The Torah is based on the belief that God made a special covenant with the Israelites which requires them to live by certain commandments (Hodge, 1877) while in Christian studies, the idea of covenant can be seen as an interpretive framework for the entire Bible (Frame, 1999). In fact, the term New Testament comes from the Latin translation of the Greek term New Covenant. With the concept of the covenant being so central to Judeo-Christian thought, it is not surprising that we see its reflection in the present, Canadian, secular, political world.

In the popular Christian context, a covenant is defined as “a solemn agreement between members of a church to act together in harmony with the precepts of the gospel” (“covenant”, n.d.a.). With this, we are beginning to see how Stephen Harper’s apology for the Indian Residential School System holds many of the same properties of
not just Old Testament covenants, but also the contemporary Christian term. The apology is an agreement between the people of Canada and its leaders, as embodied by the head of the state, to “act together in harmony with the precept of the gospel,” that gospel being The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The apology is a rededication to act in harmony with these principles.

Paul William states that a covenant “involves the making of solemn promises by means of a verbal and/or enacted oath” (cited in Niehaus, 2009, p.236) while Tucker (1965) notes that “[w]hen Yahweh swears a covenant with any of his people, the emphasis is upon his promise to them” (p. 494). Harper solemnly promised, that violations of fundamental values of the nation would “never again” (Harper, 2008) occur between Canada and its indigenous people. The emphasis of the apology, as we will see shortly as I examine the structure of the covenant, was on the government’s promise to the native population. As Harper apologizes for “failing to protect” native peoples, we see that, just like the biblical covenants, it is a promise that is like both that of a lord to a vassal and that of a husband to a wife, the emphasis is on the lord/husband’s obligations to protect his servant/wife.

From its very beginnings in Mesopotamia and Ancient Israel the notion of covenant has always been connected to the nation. In his examination of “The Covenant of Grace,” 19th century Puritan theologian, Charles Hodge (1877) notes that the Mosaic covenant is: 1) a re-enactment of the covenant made with Adam; 2) a national covenant, giving land and “national security” based on obedience, and 3) part of a sacrificial system. This categorization pertains to the apology in several ways. First of all, just as the Mosaic covenant is a re-enactment of the Adamic covenant, the apology can be seen as a re-enactment and reinterpretation of previous national covenants, most notably, The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is what Celermajer (2009) has coined re-covenanting: through the apology we update and recommit ourselves to our national values. Secondly, the apology is most definitely a national covenant. It is made by the head of the nation -- the Prime Minister, in the national temple -- the House of Commons. Important to my argument that the apology is a process of covenanting following the Burkean Order is the fact that covenants are intimately connected to notions of sacrifice.
1.1.1. **Covenant and Sacrifice:**

The root word of the Hebrew term for covenant, *berith* is simply to cut (“Covenant,” n.d.a.); thus we see that from the beginnings of Judeo-Christian thought covenants have been sealed with sacrifice. The term sacrifice is derived from the Latin *sacrificium*, which is a combination of the terms *sacer* (“set apart from the secular or profane for the use of supernatural powers” (“Sacrifice”, n.d.) and *facere* (to make). Thus, a sacrifice makes something sacred. As Israeli psychologist Ofer Zur (n.d.) notes, sacrifices are part of a process of establishing a relationship with the divine. I argue that the apology, as covenant, is part of a similar sacrificial process. While many have noted the importance of the sacrifice of soldiers in the maintenance of the nation with phrases like “the individual must die so that the nation might live” (Konigsberg; cited in Zur, n.d.), few have noted that this process is also at work symbolically through rituals such as public apologies by national leaders. Through the apology, Stephen Harper willfully offers himself which seals the covenant through symbolic sacrifice by humiliation.

1.1.2. **Covenantal Framework**

Theorists have noted how historical covenants of differing purposes have a similar framework. Perhaps the most detailed and influential of these investigations is the work of George Mendenhall (cited in Sutton, 1987) and Meredith G. Kline (1963, 1975). As David Cayley (2012) explains in “The Myth of the Secular”, “Western societies continually deploy a repertoire of themes and images” from religious sources. An examination of the similarities and differences between frameworks such as Kline’s (1963, 1975) covenantal structure, and a secular narratives, such as public apologies, leads us to a greater understanding of the power and meaning of these narratives.

In his influential work *Treaty of the Great King: the Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (1963), and *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (1975) Kline identifies commonalities between ancient Near Eastern suzerain (particular second millennium

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4 It is also necessary here to note the difference between the two very similar concepts of scapegoat and a sacrifice. Whereas a sacrifice is used to seal a covenant, a scapegoat helps to reorder the community through taking on its sins. This difference will be discussed further in Chapter Three.
BCE Hittite) covenants and the covenants of the Old Testament. Kline demonstrated that ancient Near Eastern suzerain covenants have the structure outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Structure of Ancient Near Eastern Suzerainty Covenants**

1. **Preamble:** names the King and stressing his greatness
2. **Historical Prologue:** recounts the relationship of the king and the vassal to date
3. **Ethical Stipulations:**
   1. stresses exclusive loyalty and love
   2. enumerates the specific obligations to maintaining the relationship
4. **Witnesses**
   a list of the gods witnessing the covenant
5. **Sanctions:**
   a list of blessing if the covenant is followed, and curses if it is broken
6. **Administration and Succession Arrangements:**
   a guide to the continuing the relationship for future generations

Note: Adapted from The Treaty of the Great King, (1963) and The Structure of Biblical Authority, (1975) both by M.G. Kline.

Kline finds examples of this structure in Exodus and Deuteronomy though he notes that these texts do not include a list of witnessing gods as Yahweh stresses his sole authority. Table 2 lists some of Kline’s examples of how this structure is expressed in the Old Testament.

**Table 2: The Structure of Biblical Covenants**

1. **Preamble:** ex. “I am Yahweh, your God” (Exodus 20:2)
2. **Historical Prologue:** ex. “who brought you out of Egypt, out of slavery” (Exodus 20:2)
3. **Ethical Stipulations:**
   1. the first of the ten commandments stresses exclusive loyalty and love (“You shall have no other Gods before me” (Exodus 20:3)
   2. the other nine commandments are specific requirements
4. **Sanctions:**
   ex. list of curses and blessings in Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68
5. **Administration and Succession Arrangements:**
   ex. copies of the document are to be placed at religious sanctuaries (Deut. 31:26) with periodic public reading of the document (Deuteronomy 31:9-13)

Note: Adapted from The Treaty of the Great King, (1963) and The Structure of Biblical Authority, (1972/1975) both by M.G. Kline.

Numerous Christian thinkers have mapped similar covenant formula onto the New Testament (e.g. Chilton; cited in Sutton, 1987; Frame, 1999; Hunt, 1988; Sutton,
1987). Though these scholars disagree about how well New Testament thinking fits into Kline’s formula, such theologians see this mapping as a manner of better understanding New Testament thought. Others (ex, Lomasky, 2011) have argued that examining political documents such as The U.S. Constitution in terms of the structure of biblical covenants can lead to better understanding of the meaning of these documents. Following this line of thought, examining Stephen Harper’s Apology for the residential schools in light of covenantal frameworks, such as that put forth by Kline (1963, 1972/1975), is a useful analytical tool for illuminating the deeply entrenched religious nativities at work in contemporary secular narratives.

In parliament, the apology began with this preamble from Stephen Harper:

Mr. Speaker, before I begin officially, let me just take a moment to acknowledge the role of certain colleagues here in the House of Commons in today’s events. Although the responsibility for the apology is ultimately mine alone, there are several of my colleagues who do deserve the credit… (Harper, 2008, “Statements by Ministers,” para.1)

The Prime Minister then goes on to thank the Mister of Indian Affairs and various other MPs with particular thanks to Jack Layton, the then-leader of the New Democratic Party.

In line with Kline’s (1963) covenant formula, before beginning the apology, Stephen Harper essentially names the King (himself) and stresses his greatness by stating that the responsibility is “ultimately [his] alone” (2008, “Statements by Minister,” para 1.).

The apology then moves onto a lengthier Historical Prologue completely in keeping with Kline’s (1963, 1972/1975) covenant formula:

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities.

In the 1870’s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools.
Instead of a list of stipulations, such as the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy, Harper (2008) goes on to provide a list of sins which are condemned as wrongs that should not be repeated; these, in effect, act as 'thou-shalt-nots' for the government and the Canadian nation as a whole.

Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal.

Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child".

Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country …

The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities.

Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.

Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The apology then immediately shifts to the section lacking in Deuteronomy, though present in the Suzerainty formula: a list of witnesses (Kline, 1963).

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this.
The next section in Kline’s formula is a list of curses and blessing, as in Deuteronomy 28. Though the apology does not list what will happen if we do not live in harmony with *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it does list the curses that have fallen upon us because we did not live under these conditions in the past.

We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you.

Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.


The final portion of the apology combines the final two sections of Kline’s (1963) formula by both listing the blessings which will occur if the covenant is maintained, and discussing the administration of the covenant via the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In moving toward healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian residential schools, the implementation of the Indian residential schools settlement agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities and aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the settlement agreement is the Indian residential schools truth and reconciliation commission. This commission represents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian residential schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong, communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

It is particularly notable that Kline (1963, 1972/1975) lists that the final act in the covenant formula of the Old Testament as a declaration to place copies of the covenant in the holy sanctuaries of the Israelites. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recently recommended that copies of *Stephen Harper’s Statement of Apology* (2008) be placed in every secondary school across the country.

One particular difference between the Old Testament/Ancient Near Eastern covenants and the apology is in the ambiguity as to who the Lord/Husband is and who is the vassal/wife in the agreement. This ambiguity is a result of the fact that Stephen Harper retains the position of Lord, but as democratic leader, he is a representation of his constituents and the entire nation state. As such, the apology acts as a covenant on three different levels: 1. a covenant between the Lord (The Prime Minister) and a particular group of his vassals (Indigenous People) whom he has a duty to protect; 2. a treaty between the non-indigenous population of Canada and its indigenous population (i.e. an agreement between two separate nations existing in the same space); 3. a commitment by the government to the entire imagined community of the nation of Canada to rededicate itself to the previously agreed upon values of equality and human rights which the government had violated in the Indian Residential School system. As we can see, examining the apology within Kline’s framework of ancient Near Eastern and Judaic covenants illuminates the similarities and differences between secular proclamations such as Harper’s apology and the foundational religious narratives of our Judeo-Christian society.

1.1.3. Re-Covenanting and the Burkean Order

Now that I have noted how the apology can be better understood in light of the concept of the covenant, we can proceed with a brief introduction to the heart of my thesis: the apology as an example of re-covenanting through the Burkean Order. In the social drama of the public apology a norm was transgressed, the transgression was apologized for, and society returns to its state before the transgression, thus, maintaining social homeostasis. In this examination of the framing of Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology for the Indian residential school system and its media coverage, I draw on a similar, yet more detailed framework: Kenneth Burke’s (1970) anthropological-
rhetorical narrative of Order, Rejection, Pollution, Sacrifice, and finally Redemption and Restoration of the Order. I argue that this cycle constitutes a cycle of re-covenanting. Following Burkean logic, once the covenant (or order) has been broken (or rejected), a sacrifice must be made in order for the covenant to be restored (and order to be reaffirmed). It is the act of re-covenanting: introducing and committing to a new covenant, that both social integration and social progress are achieved. In publicly apologizing, the government states its deepest values and goals, thus conveying a new covenant to its citizens and recreating and strengthening our national narrative via the media.

Stephen Harper’s apology for the residential schools and its media coverage reveal this narrative at work: the covenant of peace and upholding human rights was broken, so the symbolic sacrifice of the representative of that order, the prime minister, occurred through ritual death by the humiliation of the apology. In doing this, the nation could then be reborn, cleansed, with a new identity. Through the process of apology we are able to “re-covenant” (Celermajer, 2009), in line with Abrahamic belief structures, as well as, rituals of totemic regeneration through scapegoating which tap into universal belief structures. Through an analysis of the apology itself and its media coverage, I show how, by splitting the totem of the identity of Canada into a sinning chapter and an essential national character, members of the totem domain were able to sacrifice the totem of Canada, which had been polluted through violations of the beliefs in equality and human rights in the residential school system via the symbolic killing through humiliation of the leader of the nation. After sacrificing the totem of the sinning nation through the humiliation of the confession of sin and apology, members of the totem domain regenerated the unpolluted totem to its ideal state. Just as Hodge (1877) declared that the biblical covenants were, “nothing but a declaration of the eternal and immutable principles of justice,” this apology serves as a declaration of Canada’s commitment to the values of human rights and equality.

My analysis reveals universal frames including status reversal, humiliation, separation of the sinning nation from the cleansed nation, catharsis, and rebirth in the apology itself and its media coverage, which serve to construct a narrative of re-covenanting through the apology of the totem leader. The framing of both the apology and its media coverage ignored the colonial roots of the residential school system by
separating Canada into two distinct parts: a past era which was responsible for the residential school system and a present era that embraces the liberal democratic values as embodied in the charter of rights and freedoms. However, like Arendt’s (1958) world-delimiting moments, the apology presents an essence of the nation state, free of previous sins. This glimpse is both a return to an idealized past and a glimpse of a utopian future while espousing the covenant of dedication to human rights and equality. In Burkean terms, the apology allows us to return to the unified state that existed before the moral order was polluted by the offence. Through the apology we are able to enact the mystical paradox of returning to the past in order to move forward and be born again, cleansed of sin. In this manner it has the ability to influence the future as we, as a nation, rededicate ourselves to our society as a whole and to a new covenant.

1.2. Chapter Outline

I began this analysis by noting that Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology for the residential schools may soon be a fixture of every secondary school in the nation, thus securing a place in our national narrative. I then explain what a covenant is, how the apology fits into covenant format, and then briefly explained how, through an analysis of the apology and its media coverage, I see the apology as a form of re-covenanting which followed the Burke’s cycle of Order, Transgression causing Pollution, and Sacrifice which leads to the restoration of the Order. The following chapters provide an overview of some of the literature on public apologies and expand on the theoretical framework as well as my own analysis of the apology and its media framing.

In the second chapter I prepare the ground for this analysis by defining key concepts and note the history of the public apology. I review literature concerning collective apologies from a variety of perspectives, drawing on the work of psychologist Aaron Lazare (2004), sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis (1991), legal scholar Martha Minow (1998) and philosophers Hannah Arendt (1958) and Charles L. Griswold (2007). I then offer some context by discussing the recent proliferation of public apologies and cite reasons why this may have occurred. Closing the definitions of the apology with a profession of my belief in the importance of apology and forgiveness, I move on to a brief introduction to the idea of civil religion and secular ritual, a framework which
underlies this analysis, including the role of the media in the ritual of the public apology. This leads to a review of the literature on media events, another crucial ingredient in the foundation of this analysis. I finish the second chapter with a discussion of media framing, as this essay is based on my analysis on the frames I see in the apology and its media coverage.

The third chapter is an attempt to convey my interdisciplinary theory regarding the narrative of re-covenanting and Burke’s cycle of Order, Transgression, Sacrifice and Restoration that I see in the framing of the apology itself and its media coverage. I dive directly into a discussion of the origins of Burke’s cycle as a response to universal feelings of ubiquitous guilt, which leads into an overview of the scapegoat mechanism. From here, I discuss the concept of the totem, particularly in regards to the scapegoat mechanisms. I pay particular attention to the process of identification in opposition to the scapegoat, merging the work of Durkheim (1912/1995) regarding the totem as symbol of the community itself with Burke’s theories of sacrifice and rebirth. My discussion of the totem and sacrifice in the secular nation draws on the work of communications theorist Carolyn Marvin and clinical psychologist David W. Ingle (1996, 1999) who combine the work of Durkheim with that of Rene Girard (1977, 1987, 2001) -- who was, himself, heavily influenced by Burke -- to position the Durkheimian concept of the totem and totem regeneration as rituals of community identity and unity building in the media saturated age. I then, hopefully, make these theories less esoteric by applying them to contemporary Canada with a discussion of the residential school system as synecdoche for Canada’s original sin of colonialism.

The fourth chapter, my analysis, is the heart of my thesis. In this chapter I analyze the apology and its media coverage as a narrative of re-covenanting. I begin this chapter by discussing the importance of the media in the public sphere as moderator between the “sphere of public authority” (Habermas, 1962/1989) and the citizens. I then lay out my findings of the key frames that I discovered in the analysis following Burke’s cycle of pollution, sacrifice, and rebirth and the latent cultural narrative of totem regeneration via scapegoating that they reveal. I begin by examining the lead up to the apology including Phil Fontaine’s revelation of the extent of the abuse in the residential schools and the inadequate sacrifice of then-Minister Jane Stewart. I then discuss one of the most important frames I found in this analysis -- humiliation -- in terms of rituals of
status reversal and the divine scapegoat, noting the media framing of Jack Layton as the key denouncer and Phil Fontaine as carnival king. After this, I move on to the media framing of the apology in terms of a catharsis and symbolic resolution and possibly the most striking of all the frames in both the apology itself and its media coverage: the splitting of Canada into two distinct eras, a sinning period and an essential, cleansed era. Next, I address the frame of rebirth after the apology, paying particular attention to Danielle Celermajer’s assertion that political apologies serve as rituals of re-covenanting. I go on to discuss the apology as a national unity building exercise, a frame which the media was particularly fond of drawing upon. I contextualize my findings by addressing frames that were not there, mainly, the granting of forgiveness. I conclude by discussing reasons for both optimism and pessimism as to the apology process itself without delving into the impact, if any, the apology has for the future. Finally I make recommendations for further research on the apology process and its impact.

1.3. Significance of the Study:

The significance of this research lies in the real world consequences of media framing. Burke shows us how words are the means of domination which shape attitudes, and as attitudes are “incipient facts”, words do eventually influence actions (cited in Carter, 1996, p. 63). Though the impact of this framing on the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples in Canada and on the condition of aboriginal peoples within Canada is beyond the scale of this brief examination, recognizing this framing is useful to understanding our own national narratives and the

On a micro, measurable level, studies have found that the wording of questions can have significant impact on respondents’ perceptions of issues. Experiments conducted by Nelson and Kinder (1996; cited in Nelson, Oxley and Clawson, 1997) show how the framing of welfare, affirmative action, and AIDS, influenced people's opinions of policy regarding these issues. On a larger scale, Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson discuss how the news media framed the war in the former Yugoslavia as either “a genocidal war of imperialism between a bloodthirsty invader and its helpless neighbor... [or a] religious dispute which has only recently flared up after communist domination of the region vanished” (1997, p.222). They argue that these frames presented differing views of what the international community’s role ought to be in regards to the conflict stating that the “genocide frame recommends immediate and decisive international intervention in the conflict, while the lingering dispute frame counsels restraint, as nothing can be done about the situation anyway” (p.222). Thus, the framing of an issue can have an impact on how we respond to it.
social processes underlying national identity and unity formation and political forgiveness. I leave the question of how these frames affect attitudes, beliefs, and finally social conditions, to the next researcher.

Despite the fact that I do not examine the results of this framing, I believe that recognizing the frames involved in these narratives is important as one of the key frames revealed in this essay -- scapegoating -- is a particularly dangerous narrative. Burke cautions against the poetic power of the scapegoating process in almost every one of his major works (Carter, 1996, p. 108), warning us that, left unchecked, our narratives can get out of hand, leading to the scapegoating of innocent victims (Carter, p. 52); as Burkean scholar C. Allan Carter states, in “the pyre of an inquisition, the gallows of frontier justice, or the gas chambers of genocide... the persistence through history of atrocities perpetrated by persons determined to satisfy their need for sacrificial victims is an indication of the force behind those events” (p. xvii). Moreover, Carter warns us that although our thirst for victims might not be growing, the possibility of doing more damage increases with new technologies (p. xviii). Cognizant of these dangers, Burke argues that we must critique our own stories using the same mechanism that got us into trouble in the first place: language --though we cannot break free of words, at least we can choose our words more carefully (Carter, p. 52). As Carter succinctly notes,

analyzing our stories would help us understand our narrative identities and recognize the principles in the grip of which we operate when we lash out at others as the cause of our frustration and they in turn lash back at us. Burke puts his faith in our ability to expose the darker side of myth to the light of critical analysis. For our own sake and sake of others, we must translate the dramatic intensity of narrative back into the cooler gloss of logic in order that our contradictions may be made apparent, and our rush toward victimization checked... through systematic criticism of narrative we can limit ourselves to relatively benign forms of victimage. Through repeated efforts at self-criticism we can restrict ourselves to nonviolent types of sacrifice, such as the sacrifice of once tightly held ideas in the give-and-take of debate. (Carter, p. 53)

It is with these words of warning in mind that I undertake the examination of Stephen Harper's 2008 apology for the Indian Residential School system and its media coverage.
2. Literature Review: Apology and Ritual

To paraphrase Burke (1966), a definition is the writer’s equivalent of a lyric (p.3). In accordance with this metaphor, I begin this opera with an aria. Before delving into the theoretical background of this analysis, I use this chapter to define the terms necessary for understanding what the public apology is, as well as offering some historical context particularly as to the Greek, Abrahamic, and modern psychological, philosophical and sociological understandings of forgiveness and apologies. I then move on to discuss the proliferation of the public apology in recent times and some of the complexities of the collective apology then argue for the importance of apology and forgiveness in our imperfect world. From this, I move on to an introduction to the concepts of civil religion and the theory of media events, both of which underlie this study.

2.1. The Public Apology Defined and Explained

The meaning of the modern term apology is quite different from the Greek term apologia from which it is derived; indeed, one could say that it is the opposite. The meaning of apologia is simply a defense, in no way a plea for forgiveness with an implicit admission of guilt as the modern term has come to mean. We see this in the ancient legal terms kategoria, which was the speech of the prosecution, and apologia, which was the rebuttal of the defense. The ancient Greeks, in fact, did not see forgiveness and apology at all in the same light as we do now. Historian of philosophy Charles L. Griswold (2007, p. 7) notes that, for the Greeks, forgiveness was far from a virtue. The Socratic megalopsychos -- man of great virtue -- had no need to apologize, as he was morally perfect, and had no need to accept apologies as he did not pay heed to non-virtuous people (i.e. those who might need to apologize). For Aristotle, the idea of god offering forgiveness was particularly preposterous as god has no time for the affairs of men: the Aristotelian God is the paradigm of perfection and therefore spends all his time thinking about himself qua himself (pp. 9-10).
We can see that in a perfectionist ethical system like that of the ancient Greeks, apology is unnecessary: apology and forgiveness only become meaningful with the understanding of humans as fundamentally flawed, burdened by ubiquitous guilt. As such, forgiveness is a key feature of the Abrahamic tradition. Griswold (2007) writes that, “forgiveness is a virtue against the background of a narrative about human nature and its aspirations” referring to “metaphysical forgiveness” as, “the effort to give up the ressentiment caused by the manifold imperfections of the world” (p. xix) While Griswold does much to avoid religious language, the necessity of forgiveness in light of the doctrine of original sin has long been noted; 18th Century theologian and philosopher Bishop Joseph Butler begins both of his sermons on forgiveness by noting the imperfection of the world and the problems with reconciliation with this imperfection (Griswold, p. xxii). As both Butler and modern thinkers such as Harvard law professor Martha Minow point out, forgiveness enables us to express compassion in our recognition of our shared imperfection and our commonality as sinners (Griswold, p. 34; Minow, 1998, p. 20), a great virtue in the Abrahamic tradition.

2.1.1. The Modern Term

In its most basic form, the modern term apology can be defined as simply the act of saying sorry. As Canadian sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis (1991) states, “other features, for example, offers of reparation, self-castigation, shame, embarrassment, or promises to reform, may accompany an apology, but they are inessential because… they are implicit in the state of being sorry” (p. 36) Though it might seem counterintuitive, public and private apologies not only serve the same functions (“acknowledging the offense, offering explanations, expressing shame and remorse, and making reparations” (Lazare, 2004, p. 39) but also share the same dyadic nature. As Tavuchis (p. 98) explains, for the collective apology to be successful, all parties concerned, but particularly the injured party, must perceive of the Many as a single entity with its own voice. Griswold (2007, p. 190) argues that the group must be
anthropomorphized and given the agency to express itself.\textsuperscript{6} In this manner, the collective apology retains its dyadic nature.

However, Tavuchis (1991) states that collective apologies go beyond the dyadic nature that they share with private apologies as they are addressed not only to the offended party, but also to “interested third parties, the wider society, its own institutional history, and posterity.” He argues that we can therefore not judge collective apologies on features present in personal apologies, such as emotion, but that, “the practical and symbolic import of collective apology has to be judged in terms of the remedial and reparative work it accomplishes” (p. 109). This, as I see it, is the key difference between the private and public apology: the importance of sincerity vs. posterity. Both Tavuchis (p. 71-2) and Professor of Psychiatry Aaron Lazare (2004, p. 39) argue that private apologies must be felt to be sincere whereas the importance of the public apology is not its sincerity but rather, its ability to put the things on the public record. As Griswold (2007) concisely states, the purpose of “an official, ritual, or ceremonial expression of apology and regret, offered in a political context, is precisely to communicate a moral point publicly and impersonally” (p. 142). Even an insincere public apology still serves to publicly endorse rules of conduct (Lazare, p. 119) or provide grounds for compensation (Tavuchis, p. 63). We can see this clearly as so many political apologies, including Harper’s apology for the residential schools, are tied to education campaigns. As political and social theorist Steven Lukes (1997, p. 366; quoted in Harris, Grainger & Mullany, 2006, p. 719) argues, a demand for a public apology is often a demand for “a reconsideration and discursive reframing of history” as opposed to a request for a sincere expression of regret. The apology process contributes a narrative of rededication to the norms of the society.

Although all apologies pertain to issues of social order and membership in a moral community (Lazare, 2004; Tavuchis, 1991; Griswold, 2007), Tavuchis notes that these features are particularly emphasized by the public apology (p.39). In a

\textsuperscript{6} For example, when individual Japanese citizens apologized at the Israeli embassy following the Lod Airport Massacre in which members of the Japanese Red Army had murdered Israeli citizens, Griswold argues that the Japanese saw themselves as, “symbolic co-offenders,” despite the fact that they, personally, had no involvement in the massacre (Griswold, 2007, p. 49).
Foucauldian sense, our understandings of concepts such as social and moral rules become heightened in the presence of deviance (Tavuchis, p. 12); thus, genuine apologies are affirmation rituals of social and moral identities and orders (p. 13, 22, 27). When wrongs against the moral order are noted, and a member of that order is expelled and then readmitted through the apology process, our identity as a moral community is refined and strengthened. A national collective apology thus refines and strengthens our identity as a moral community in opposition to the action which is being apologized for as we recommit to our own values.

Yet, no matter how we define it or the purposes it serves, the idea of collective apology is problematic to the individualistic western mind. We are (unsurprisingly) disturbed by the idea of apologizing for acts which we, personally, did not commit. Though we frequently refer to collectives as having emotions or attributes (ex. a greedy corporation or a healthy community), as Tavuchis (1991, p. 97) notes, “references to corporate sorrow or remorse” seem to “push personification beyond its limits”. Even the paying of reparations is troublesome. Minow (1998, p. 131) argues that “reparations elevate things over persons, commodities over lives, money over dignity.” In discussing the apology for the Japanese internment in the U.S, Ben Takashita of the Japanese American Citizens’ League stated that while money could not compensate for lost freedom, it did show that the apology was “sincere” (quoted in Tavuchis, p. 107). Yet, another Japanese-American who received $20 000 after being interned during his wartime childhood stated, “the American government stole four years of my childhood and has now put a price of $5 000 for each stolen year” (Lazare, 2004, p. 132). Similarly, a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of a member of the clergy argued that some victims feel like “prostitutes” after receiving financial reparations for being sexually violated (Lazare, p. 132; Griswold, 2007, p. 153) while Lazare notes that such reparations can even feel like “hush money” in the context of large organizations such as the Catholic church (p. 132). In an article in Le Devoir, one residential school survivor sarcastically asks another if she’ll feel “healed” after receiving her settlement, to which she and the other survivors in the room could only respond with grim laughter (Thohahoken, 2008). In the article, this first survivor says that it is as if Canada has burned down his house yet has offered to pay for the windows, expecting that this will settle the score (Thohahoken). As Minow worries (1998, p. 93), putting a price on
experience such as the death of a child, internment, or torture, trivializes such experiences as no amount of money would make up for this suffering.

Yet, despite the obvious complication of offering collective apologies in nations built on an ethic of individualism, and the numerous moral and symbolic difficulties of offering reparations for unspeakable crimes, as Lazare (2004) suggests, if we are to take pride in things we are not personally responsible for (i.e. national sports teams, famous ancestors, etc.) then we also must accept shame for that which we are not personally responsible. If we have national pride, then we must accept national shame (p.41). Lazare argues that this pride and shame are part and parcel of what we call a national identity (p. 84): they meld and shape our national narratives. And if our leaders bolster themselves with the heroic acts of national ancestors, then they must also accept the shame of these predecessors. Though humans never actually undertook the contract which Hobbes describes in Leviathan, we do “in principle” make such a contract as we choose one sovereign to represent and personify the group (Burke, 1970, p. 242). The legitimacy of political authority in a democratic nation is based on the agreement to allow a group to have agency as if it were an individual by substituting one member for the group. This social contract gives our elected sovereign, as our representative, the right to take pride in our successes, and also the ability, and some argue, duty, to apologize for our mistakes.

2.2. The Proliferation of the Public Apology

Yet despite our ambiguous feelings towards collective apologies, they are proliferating. More than twenty years ago, in his book, *Mea Culpa*, Tavuchis stated that it was impossible to tell whether there had been an increase in the general propensity to apologize, yet, due to the global proliferation of “impersonal and legal systems of control,” the apology might become “an important means of both personal and political reconciliation” (quoted in Lazare, 2004, p. 6). Lazare sees Tavuchis’ pronouncement regarding the then-future of apologies as prophetic because in the two decades since the book’s publication, celebrity apologies have kept the tabloid papers in business and political apologies have become recurrent headlines of the world’s most respected media outlets. Since *Mea Culpa*’s publication, Queen Elizabeth has apologized for
seizure of Maori land, Tony Blair has apologized for the Irish potato famine (Harris et al., 2006, p. 716), President Bill Clinton has apologized for US involvement in the slave trade (as well as offering numerous apologies for his sexual indiscretions), Australian Prime Minister Kenneth Rudd has apologized to the Stolen Generations, Stephen Harper has apologized for the residential schools, Pope Jean-Paul alone made more than twenty apologies, and countless other celebrities from comedian Michael Richards to golfer Tiger Woods have attempted to apologize for public misbehaviour and private indiscretions.

British socio-linguists Sandra Harris, Karen Grainger, and Louise Mullany (2006, p. 716) suggest that, with the exception of requests, in the last two decades, no other speech act has generated as much research as apologies. However, according to Meier (cited in Harris et al., p. 717), very little of this research has sought to explain the underlying social processes which have contributed to the rise in the public apology such as, I add, its relation to narratives of re-covenanting. Despite this lack of sociological or linguistic research on the rise of the public apologies, theories regarding its proliferation exist in the popular media and have also been posited from a more psychological perspective. A recent Canadian Broadcast Corporations documentary television program argued that the increase of “branding” has led to more apologies as people are increasingly concerned with their reputations (de Guerre, 2012). People such as athletes (both professional and amateur) and musicians are gaining a higher percentage of their income from endorsements and thus have to be more concerned with maintaining a good reputation, making them more keen to apologize when they are caught doing something that might mar that reputation. Others see the increase in public apologies since the 1960s as a result of the once-powerless now demanding more respect (Lazare, 2004 p. 155): as the status and power of women, people of colour, religious minorities, and the LGBT community increases, so do their demands for apologies from former oppressors. Moreover, as Lazare also notes, the increasing status of women – who, research shows, generally apologize more frequently than men (see Lazare pp. 29 -30) – may also be leading to the proliferation of the apology. Even though women may not be making most public apologies themselves, they may be influencing the political and corporate climates from which the apologies arise.
Certainly, new technologies have lead to greater need for public apologies. With globalization made possible by technologies, countries have more opportunities to come into conflict with one another thus leading to more chances for misunderstandings and offences, thus more reason for apologies. Lazare (2004) goes so far as to argue that because of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the stakes are higher and therefore more is being done to prevent war before it happens, including strategically apologizing (p. 262). He also notes that new media mean that once-secret behaviors are more frequently revealed, increasing both possible offence-taking and the necessity of apology (p. 12). One can argue that the cell-phone camera alone has necessitated numerous public apologies for behaviour which previously would not have been on display. New media also give opportunities for the less advantaged to see what they are missing socially, politically, and economically (Lazare, p. 262) meaning that more people are demanding apologies for things they never before knew that they were missing. Minow (1998) even seems to attribute the rise of the political apology, in part, to the “public culture of private feelings” generated by the TV talk show (p. 115).

The increased speed of the news cycle may also have spurred the coverage, and hence our awareness, if not the actual proliferation of the public apology. Twenty-four hour news channels and funding cuts to news agencies mean that journalists are under pressure to turn out stories and, as communications theorist Zohar Kampf (2011) notes, apologies are an extremely attractive narrative for journalists. Along with their obvious emotional appeal, Kampf argues that bringing transgressions to public attention and thus helping to elicit apologies from public figures can be a manner of legitimizing journalistic work as it enables them to “perform their role as norm enforcers” (Lazarsfeld and cited in Kampf, p. 5). In the case of Stephen Harper’s apology for the residential schoMerton, ols, the fact that journalists joined the chorus of the oppressed indigenous peoples who had been demanding an apology for years, and thus gave voice to the voiceless, must have surely made covering the apology attractive to journalists.

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It is worth noting that in his study of Israeli political apology coverage from 1997 to 2004, Kampf (2011) found that 49% of apologies were in some way precipitated by journalists themselves. He writes, “many of the actual remedial acts made by transgressors...were initiated by journalists in the redress stage, after questioning the wrongdoer during an interview about his obligation to apologize or after performing direct mediation between the conflicting parties” (p. 80).
In addition, we cannot ignore the significance of the year 2000 as a Jubilee Year for Christians around the globe in regards to the proliferation of the public apology. In 1994, Pope John Paul II argued that, on the threshold of the new millennium, the church should encourage its members to “purify themselves through repentance of past errors” (cited in Lazare, 2004, p. 11). This, coupled with Pope John Paul’s own public apologies, gives Christians, particularly Catholics, both an apologizing role-model and a spiritual directive to make more apologies.

More cynically, the proliferation of the public apology may be due, in part, to recent research showing the money-saving value of the apology. In 1991, Tavuchis wrote that, “because apology necessarily acknowledges admission and fault... it is likely to be interpreted as acceptance of liability and grounds for compensation by authoritative third parties [making an apology a] stupid and costly gesture” (pp. 94-95); however, this is not the case today. More recent peer-reviewed research has shown that, at least in the medical world, not apologizing may actually cause a patient to file a malpractice-suit as it is taken as an insult (noted in Lazare, 2004, p. 173); people may be offering more public apologies as their lawyers recognize that it may save them money in the long run.

The long string of public, particularly, political, apologies in Canada in the last two decades has led Canadian English professors Henderson and Wakeham (2009) to believe that the proliferation of the public apology, “surely suggests something about how nation states currently qualify themselves to belong to the liberal community of countries wielding the banner of human rights” (p.3). I argue that this “something” is the discovery that the apology process builds a narrative of re-covenanting that allows us to redefine and rededicate ourselves to the values of human rights and equality. Henderson and Wakeham insightfully assert that the last two decades of public apologies by nation states “speak the kinds of performances through which the sense of post-ideological endpoint of history is secured in the west” (p. 3). The apology for the residential schools is a covenant to end all covenants. It is the confession of the original

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8 One of the articles analyzed quotes a residential school survivor, post-apology, as saying “They never moved an inch till the lawsuits started,” (Salutin, June 13, 2008) noting the apology process only began after the class-action lawsuits against the government by abuse survivors began.
sin of the nation; yet, as Burke informs us, the perfection instinct means that it is not the end of the cycle.

2.3. The Importance of the Apology and the “Predicament of Irreversibility”

In *Forgiveness and Revenge*, Canadian philosopher Trudy Govier argues that the inability to forgive is a blueprint for “lasting hatred, ongoing conflict, and sagas of revenge” (cited in Griswold, 2007, p. 93). In his discussion of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and South Africa, Michael Ignatieff writes:

The past continues to torment because it is not past. These places are not living in a serial order of time but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and the present are a continuous, agglutinated mass of fantasies, distortions, myths, and lies. Reporters in the Balkan war often discovered, when they were told atrocity stories, that they were uncertain whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941 or 1841 or 1441. For the tellers of the tale, yesterday and today were the same. Simultaneity, it would seem, is the dream time of vengeance. (p. 186; quoted in Griswold, 2007, p. 192)

The inability to cleanse the present of the past can lead to the horrors of unending cycles of retribution: through apology, we are able to separate the present and the past and escape from what Hannah Arendt (1958) calls the “predicament of irreversibility.” Yet, for Arendt, the necessity for forgiveness does not develop merely from the need to reconcile and maintain social cohesion following political conflict: it arises from the fundamental plural nature of the world. Arendt’s biographer and former student Elizabeth Young-Bruehl (2009, p. 52), notes that, whenever we act, our actions become part of the complex network of others’ actions and thus their consequences become unknowable; thus, we are at risk of becoming “guilty” of consequences of our action which we “never intended or even foresaw” (p. 223). Through the apology, we are able to mitigate this frightening prospect via the “possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility”. As Arendt succinctly states: “being able to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing – is the faculty of forgiving” (p. 237). Apology and forgiveness allow us to symbolically undo the
past (Griswold, 2007, p. xv) and promote a desirable future by freeing us from the “injuries and resentments of the past” (p. 145).

Of course, this may sound ridiculous, because, aside from invoking some idea of time travel through speech act, the very act of forgiveness reminds us of the deed in question (Pettigrove, 2006, p. 484). But as philosopher Glen Pettigrove notes, “Our actions are partly constituted by their consequences” (p. 486). In forgiving, we change the outcome of the act and thus we do alter the past; we undo the deeds of the past by moving them “outside the domain of the natural consequences of the misdeed… reinterpre[ting] the perpetrator in the light of the present… and creating opportunities for new actions and new relations not determined… by the transgression” (p. 485). Tavuchis (1991) also recognizes the time-traveling capability of the apology, although perhaps less obviously. He argues that “the singular achievement of apologetic discourse paradoxically resides in its capacity to effectively eradicate the consequences of the offence” (p. viii). The apology has the ability to change the future as it breaks the linear process from the offense to consequence. Tavuchis refers to the apology’s “talismanic” (p. 5) qualities: the fact that though “no matter how sincere and effective,” an apology cannot undo the past, yet this is exactly what it does. Similarly Griswold (2007) points out that the apology attempts to do the impossible by undoing the past (p. xv) and Simmel recognizes this in stating that, “in both conciliation and forgiving lies something irrational, something like a denial of what one still was a moment before” (cited in Tavuchis, p. 36).

Though Pettigrove’s (2006) discussion of Hannah Arendt and collective forgiveness brings to mind the idea of covenanting, he does not use the term itself. He notes that in forgiving, one is promising to behave towards a person in a certain way and that forgiveness, therefore, is a commitment to a future not determined by the past: this is re-covenanting. It breaks through the cycle of resentment, retaliation and revenge which Bishop Joseph Butler (cited in Pettigrove, 2006, p. 489) discussed. Because, as Arendt (1958) argues, forgiveness is the only action which does not merely react but “acts anew… unconditioned by the act of which provoked it.” Through forgiveness and apology we are able to return to an ideal past, a Garden of Eden without sin. In what Arendt refers to as a “world-rupturing” or “delimiting” moment, forgiveness brings these processes of interaction caused by the initial wrongs to an end and facilitates the
possibility of a new beginning. In Burkean terms, the apology allows us to return to the unified state that existed before the moral order was polluted by the offence. Through the apology we are able to enact the mystical paradox of returning to the past in order to move forward and be born again, cleansed of sin. But in order for us to be cleansed of sin, a sacrifice must be offered, a topic I now turn to in a discussion of the apology as a secular ritual.

2.4. Civil Religion and Secular Ritual

To this point, this chapter has sought to define the terms surrounding collective apologies, and to place them into their historical context and examine them from philosophical and psychological perspectives. I now move onto a review of some of the literature which predicates my theoretical framework from a more anthropological and sociological perspective, beginning with an exploration of the framework alluded to in the introduction, that of civil religion and secular ritual.

In 1922, the German legal scholar Carl Schmitt published *Political Theology*. In it, he argued “all significant concepts for the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts” (quoted on Cayley, 2012). Following Schmitt’s thought; Harvard professor of Law and Humanities Paul Kahn notes that, in the West, the secular nation state has taken on the role of fulfilling our need for transcendence using religions themes. Yet, as Craig Calhoun, director of the London School of Economics, explains, the contemporary ‘myth of the secular’ convinces us that, since the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Wars of Religion in 1648, the realms of politics and religion have remained separate in Western society. Kahn argues that this myth hides the fact that our political practices are rooted in religious traditions (Cayley). In my Introduction, I discussed how the apology maps onto the framework of Ancient Near-Eastern and Biblical covenant. In the following sections, I expand on this notion of contemporary Canada is not entirely secular, but rather, based on the civil religion of liberal democracy, and particularly on a devotion to human rights and equality. This understanding of the importance of civil religion in Canada is crucial to my view of Stephen Harper’s apology for the Indian Residential School system as a secular ritual of re-covenanting.
2.4.1. **Religion, Ritual, Social Cohesion and Power**

Coming from the Latin *religare* -- to bind -- Durkheim (cited in Lemert, 1999, p. 247) defined religion as “beliefs and practices which united into one single moral community…. all those who adhere to them.” In Durkheimian thought, religion offers both cosmological answers and continuity of moral practices leading to social cohesion expressed and maintained through ritual. Neo-Durkheimians such as Robert Bellah, Robert Merton and Talcot Parsons argue that religion “or its functional equivalent” (Lemert, p. 264) continues to be at the core of all societies. Although science may have taken over much of the role religion once held in answering cosmological questions of existence in post-industrial societies, societies still need ritual for social cohesion.

Given its power as social glue, religion has long been the jumping off point for the study of ideology (Bell, 1992, p. 187), and it is therefore not surprising that, since Sir James Frazer (1890/1993), historians, sociologists and anthropologists have linked notions of ritual to those of political power (Bell, p. 193). As rituals are fundamentally about the public construction of meaning (Brewin, 2011, p. 4), those in power have long had a desire to control the encoding and decoding of public rituals. Though Durkheimians have maintained that ritual is a mechanism to maintain social stasis, Turner (1969) advanced the notion that rituals were more than just the social glue which hold society together but are processes which relate “a world in becoming, not a world in being” (cited in Deflem, 1991, p. 17). This idea has important affinities with Arendt’s (1958) notion of a liminal delimiting moment.

I do not go as far as ritual theorist Catherine Bell (1992) in believing that all ritual is a means of constructing “limited and limiting” power relationships (p.8). Nor do I subscribe to political and social theorist Steven Lukes’ claim that “collective effervescence” does not so much unite communities as strengthen the power of dominant groups (cited in Bell, p. 178). Although I recognize the hegemonic power of ritual, I see both the unifying and reformatory power of ritual in line with American communication theorist Robert L. Ivie (2007, p.237) who states:

Rituals are dramatic performances that can draw upon verbal and nonverbal symbols jointly to enact and thereby reconstruct political motives with sufficient ambiguity to accommodate a diversity of otherwise conflicted identities and interpretations. As a recurring practice, each
ritualized reiteration combines familiar, reassuring sense of convention with a creative, experimental individuating facet of improvisation, which together can facilitate over time both a renewal and modification of national identity, political attitude, and governing worldview. It is at once a conserving and reforming social practice. (Ivie, 2007, p. 237)

Thus rituals, in performing both conserving and reforming social functions, are important secular instruments particularly suited to the task of replacing, in many instances, the role formerly played by institutionalized expressions of religiosity. Rituals, in other words, often serve as a kind of secular faith, a notion I now consider in relation to Robert Bellah’s (1967) concept of civil religion.

2.4.2. Bellah’s “Civil Religion in America”

Though the term “civil religion” appears as far back as Rousseau’s Social Contract, the concept was long-ignored in sociological thought until the 1967 publication of Robert Bellah’s seminal article “Civil Religion in America” (Wimberly and Swatos, n.d.). Bellah argues that the reason that the concept of civil religion had been ignored for so long is because of our western understanding of the concept of religion itself “as denoting a single type of collectivity of which an individual can be a member of one and only one at a time” (1967, p. 116, endnote 1). He argues that if we instead held the “Durkheimian notion that every group has a religious dimension” (p. 116, endnote 1) we would be more likely to recognize this dimension of our own society. Bellah defines civil religion as the “transcendent universal religion of the nation” (Bellah; cited in Wimberly and Swatos). The concept fits in well with the functionalism of Emile Durkheim and Bellah’s mentor, Talcot Parsons (Wimberly and Swatos). Bellah’s work, which focuses on civil religion in the U.S.A., is predicated on the notion that the majority of Americans share symbols, beliefs and rituals that constitute a civil religion (Bellah; cited in Wimberly and Swatos). Though he does not directly refer to civil religion as being socially integrative, he notes that it allows for a common standard of ethics for the nation and its leaders. He urges for a deeper analysis of political events in terms of their religious nature stating that, “what people say on solemn occasions need not be taken at face value, but it is often indicative of deep-seated values and commitments that are not made explicit in the course of everyday life” (Bellah, 1967).
Bellah (1967) argues that civil religion has existed since the founding of the United States of America. American politicians have long-noted the utilitarian purpose of religion in the founding and maintenance of the nation. As George Washington said in his farewell address, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports” (quoted in Bellah, p. 6). Bellah recognized similar sentiments in his own time, noting that Dwight Eisenhower was reported to have said, "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith - and I don't care what it is" (quoted in Bellah, p. 3).

Bellah (1967) states that, “Behind the [American] civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, and Sacrificial Death and Rebirth” yet, it is not specifically a Christian narrative as, “it has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols” (p. 18). He refers to the constitution and the Declaration of Independence as “the holy scriptures” and to George Washington as Moses who liberates the people from oppression at the hands of tyrants. Bellah recognized that themes of death and rebirth were constant in the rhetoric of the American presidents, seeing Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (which was dedicated at the Gettysburg National Cemetery for the civil war dead) as part of an American New Testament in which Lincoln symbolically died, just as the soldiers of the civil war actually died, in order for the nation to be reborn (Bellah). Lincoln - “the martyred president” - has long been associated with the Christ archetype, and, with Lincoln’s actual death, “the theme of sacrifice was indelibly written into the civil religion” (p. 11). Bellah argues that Memorial Day gives ritual expression to the themes of sacrifice and rebirth as “rededication to the martyred dead, to the spirit of sacrifice, and to the American vision” (p.11) and recognized these themes in his own time with John F. Kennedy's inaugural address of January 20, 1961, in which Kennedy said, “We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom -- symbolizing an end as well as a beginning -- signifying renewal as well as change” (p.1). These themes of sacrifice and rebirth are essential components of my analysis of the apology and its media coverage as a process of re-covenanting.
2.4.3. Civil Religion in Canada

While Paul Kahn argues that the political culture of the United States can only be understood in light of its theological foundations of its key concepts, he does not think that this is necessarily universally true of every country’s politics (Cayley, 2012). In the 1960s, sociologists including Bellah and Seymour Martin Lipset were hesitant to acknowledge civil religion in Canada (Kim, 1993). Bellah blamed our lack of civil religion on English Canada’s adoption of Britain’s symbols and rituals as well as the fact that Quebec was distinct from the rest of the country (Robert Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, 1982). In a 1976 article, political scientist Dr. John H. Redekop (1976) argued that civil religion never flourished in Canada due to factors such as our regionalism, the policy of multiculturalism and the fact that “Canada has remained a small or middle power [which] has provided relatively little occasion for seeing the country in a saviour role, especially as far as military achievements are concerned” (p. 13).

This lack of civil religion in Canada can no longer be said to be the case (if it ever really were). Particularly since the 1960s and gaining motivation from the Patriation of the Constitution, Canadians have attempted to “to legitimate their regime in ultimate principles that their adherents see as sacred and incontestable” (von Heyking, 2007). Canadian politicians have even been known to use the terminology of such thinking, as did justice minister Irwin Cotler when he stated that “human rights has emerged as the new secular religion of our time” (von Heyking).

It has also been argued that since its inception in 1982, The Charter of Rights and Freedoms has become the sacred text of our civil religion. As Daniel Elazar investigates in his four volume opus, The Covenant Tradition in Politics, Judeo-Christian societies have secularized biblical covenant ideas of “freedom and restraint first as ‘liberties and obligation’, then as ‘rights and duties,’ and ultimately, as civil and human rights” (summarized in Allen, 1999). In an article, for Cardus, a conservative Christian Canadian policy think tank, political science professor John von Heyking (2010) professes the typical view of civil religion in Canada, stating:

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been accompanied by a mythology or civil religion that views Canada as the site of the progressive unfolding of human potentiality, freedom, and equality. Instead of viewing Canadian democracy in limited Lockean terms of
responsible government, and instead of drawing its sacred symbols from historical Christianity, it draws its symbols from the “democratic faith” of pluralism, tolerance, cosmopolitanism, autonomy, and equality. The 1867 Constitution is seen to have been drafted by bigots and racists, and a second founding (in 1982) is required to correct the earlier botched job. (von Heyking, 2010)

Von Heyking (2010) notes that, in an editorial for The Globe and Mail, Jeffrey Simpson referred to justices of the Supreme Court as “legal cardinals,” in that they had replaced the church authorities. Although his analysis reveals many interesting aspects of secular rituals in Canada, von Heyking ignores the biblical narratives of covenanting, as well as the universal themes of sacrifice and regeneration which are evident in Canadian civil religion today. However, he does bring up the crucial fact that Canadians felt a need for a new constitution -- a new covenant for this secular religion. Bellah (1967) argues that civil religion sets a higher standard by which the nation should be judged; I believe this has become the case in Canada with a new set of standards, presented in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in light of which our past and present national actions are now judged. This new covenant took shape as a belief in human rights and continues to be expressed and maintained, redefined and committed to again, through media events such as Stephen Harper's 2008 public apology for the residential schools.

2.5. The Role of the Media in the Apology Ritual

In traditional communities, cyclical rituals continually re-define and reinforce cultural narratives. In the contemporary, atomized nation state, we rely on the media to convey our national narratives. As such, it is not surprising that the media’s role in public apologies is so significant; indeed, apologies that do not include a media component are not seen as adequate⁹. With the help of the media, collective apologies have the ability “to make history by apologizing for it” (Buck, 2006. p. 97). By simply covering the event, the media initially convey and then reinforce the narrative put

⁹ For example, President Clinton’s apology for American involvement in Guatemala was seen as insufficient as, “there was no attempt to address the Guatemalan people and/or the American public by television or by radio” (Gibney and Roxstrom, 2001, p. 929).
forward by the apology, even when coverage of that apology is not entirely positive; thus, the media play a critical role in the ritual that is the apology.

Some theorists (e.g. Kampf, 2011) have gone so far as to state that it is the media that create the "social drama" (Turner, 1967) of the public apology. Kampf argues that the breach stage of the social drama only begins, not with the actual transgression of the social norm, but rather with the media calling the transgression to public attention. He states:

the initial act by politicians or organizations cannot be considered as part of the social drama... as it is only through journalistic practices -- whether involvement in framing the act as offensive or reporting others' claims regarding its offensive nature -- that acts are transformed into transgressions. In most cases, without journalists drawing attention to the offensive nature of a specific act, no transgression would be identified and no discursive struggle would erupt. (Kampf, 2011, p. 76)

The media is an absolutely essential component of the contemporary public apology and it is only through this lens that the cultural narrative it presents can be understood. Because of this, I now turn to a review of Dayan and Katz's (1992) theory of media events and position the mediated apology process within the framework of civil religion and secular ritual.

2.6. Media Events

2.6.1. Media and the Public Sphere

Nancy Fraser (1990) defines the public sphere as "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (p.57). It is the space of mediation between the private sphere and the sphere of public authority; in the language of Marvin and Ingle (1999), the public sphere allows the totem domain (politicians, the police, and the armed forces) to communicate with the popular and affiliative (counterpublic) domains. The media have always been vital to the theory of the public sphere. For Habermas (1992), literacy, access to literature, and critical journalism were essential to establishment of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe, and as he mused in his 1992 “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”, the public sphere is
now, more than ever, dominated by the mass media. Events which happen in the public sphere cannot be separated from their media coverage.

It is not controversial to state that the vast majority of Canadians have no physical interaction with federal politicians, do not attend parliament, and do not read documents such as the Hansard or Royal Commissions; therefore, the media is the manner in which the government puts forward its ideas and in which national narratives are created. The media is essential to strengthening the “imagined community” of the nation of Canada. For this reason, I analyzed both the text of the apology itself and the media coverage of the event. In effect, for the vast majority of Canadians, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, the media event of the apology was the apology.

2.6.2. The Media Event as Secular Ritual

Communication theorists and other scholars have frequently borrowed terms from anthropology and sociology (e.g. Victor Turner’s “social drama” (Alexander and Jacobs; Wagner-Pacific; all cited in Kampf, 2011) to understand the role of the media in society, yet none have resonated as much as Dayan and Katz’s (1992) term “media event.” In an attempt to bring the anthropology of ceremony (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1995; Handelman; Levi-Straus; all cited in Dayan and Katz, p. 2) together with the study of mass communication, neo-Durkheimians Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz believe that media events, as ritual, function to foster mechanical solidarity (p. viii) and note that “collective viewing reinforces a shared perspective on reality (p. 177, quoted in Scannel, 1995, p. 153). As Dayan and Katz former student Eric W. Rothenbuhler notes, “For us, Durkheim’s (1912/1995) book The Elementary Forms of Religious Life was a work of communication theory (Rothenbuhler, 1993) and anthropological studies of ritual more generally provided important models for re-conceptualizing communication theory” (Rothenbuhler, 2009, p. 63.

According to this line of thinking, the mass media allow public events to be available for private consumption (Talbot, 2007, p. 23), fostering solidarity with a larger public despite physical isolation. Dayan and Katz define the media event as a broadcast occasion that is “preplanned, announced and advertised in advance” (1992, p. 7), treated with reverence and ceremony, that celebrates the core values of the society.
(Lukes; cited in Dayan and Katz, p.12). In his article, “From Media Events to Ritual to Communicative Form”, Eric W. Rothenbuhler (2009) adds that the media event has come to be understood as often having “serious political and social consequences” (p. 60). The apology for the residential schools most certainly fits all these categories as it was a long-anticipated, somber affirmation of the government of Canada’s commitment to human rights and equality.

Dayan and Katz (1992) rightly note that while media events can address conflict, they celebrate reconciliation (p.8) and the voluntary actions by great men and are, thus, generally hegemonic (p.8). Certainly, we can see that this is the case with the role of the great men in the apology process; however, Dayan and Katz believe that, though hegemonically sponsored, like all rituals, media events can have the power to transform both the symbolic and the real (p. 147) by allowing a nation an opportunity to enter into a liminal period in the Turnerian sense. According to Turner (cited in Dayan and Katz, p. 104) this liminal period shifts our definition of reality from indicative (what reality is) to subjunctive (what reality might or should be) thus inviting us to re-examine the status quo (p. 20). The study of national media events has often focused on the purely conservative functions of events such as royal weddings and presidential funerals rather than events that seek to transform societies (Mihelj, 2008, p. 472), such as public apologies. Yet, the original collaboration between the American social scientist, Katz, and the humanist of the French tradition, Dayan, was born of the study of the media coverage of Sadat’s first visit to Jerusalem, an event which produced permanent social change. This paradoxical nature of being both hegemonic and transformative is particularly true of the media event of the public apology. In his examination of public apologies as Turnerian “social dramas” (Turner, 1969), communications scholar Zohar Kampf (2011) argues that “the uniqueness of this type of process is that, in contrast to other types of mediatized rituals (Cottle, 2006), it promotes both social disagreement and consent and consists of both conflictual and remedial types of discourse in the same social process” (2011, p. 73). Like all rituals, media events have both conservative and reformatory power.

In line with Arendt’s (1958) theory of forgiveness, I see that it is through its liminal status as articulation of the subjunctive that the media event of the government apology has the ability to transform society. Rothenbuhler argues that it is their capacity as ritual
which allows media events to “chang[e] minds, and chang[e] history” (p. 63). Like Arendt’s world-delimiting moments, the apology presents to us an essence of the nation state, free of previous sins, which is both a return to an idealized past and a glimpse of a utopian future while espousing the covenant of dedication to human rights and equality. It is in its status as an idealized version of the nation that the process of re-covenanting occurs.

Though it is undoubtedly the case that the media event of the apology itself is planned and orchestrated by hegemonic ‘great men’, the role of the journalist in this process is critical. As Kampf (2011) argues, “journalists may use the media’s archive to retrieve documented apologies made by previous transgressors in order to compel them to conduct themselves in the present in a manner consistent with their words in the past” (p. 82). If Moses’ Israelites begin to worship the Golden Calf again, journalists are able to call upon the words of the past to enforce the covenant.

Despite its “conspicuous presence” the link between the formation of national narratives and media events is an under-examined topic (Mihelj, 2008, 473). As Paddy Scannel (cited in Mihelj p. 472) notes, although many of the case studies in Dayan and Katz’s (1992) Media Events relate directly to issues of national identity, they remain relatively silent on the issue itself. For Hannah Arendt (1958), the public sphere exists for “self-revealing” as much as for mutual understanding (Calhoun and McGowan, 1997, p.8). She saw the public sphere as a kind of “organized remembrance” (cited in LaMothe, 2012 p. 3) which comes into being in shared narratives, forging individual and collective identities, encompassing social, economic and political beliefs and expressed in institutions and secular rituals. By logical extension, the media, in playing such a huge role in the creation of the contemporary public sphere, has a critical role to play in creating not only self-identities but national narratives and identities. Media and cultural theorist Sabina Mihelj argues that it is only in brief moments highlighted in media events that nations actually do come together as the imagined communities that they are always assumed to be (p. 475). Mihelj goes as far as to say that, given the size of contemporary nation states, it is only with broadcasting those efforts at national identity building can be successful (p. 476).
The fact that we are not in a traditional society where everyone is in physical attendance at public rituals, but must, instead, witness them through the mediation of newspapers, television, radio, websites, etc, that the contemporary secular ritual of the media event gains greater transformative power. Media theorists (ex. Benjamin; McLuhan; Ong; all cited in Brewin, 2011, p. 20) note that the media text allows for distancing and self-conscious separation. This distancing allows for critique in ways that actually attending a ritual does not as it lets one pause and reflect. The media event of the public apology allows us to participate in the public sphere by considering and critiquing the media event in a manner that would not be possible if we were actually in attendance at the secular ritual itself. As Shiping Tang (2011) argues, for the hegemonic powers, the problem with state apologies is that the apologizers want it both ways: they want to have credit for apologizing even as they want the world to remain the same. Yet the distancing allowed in the media event allows for too much critique. However, as we will see in my examination of Stephen Harper’s apology for the residential schools, the notion of re-covenanting allows for both hegemonic and transformative goals to occur through the media event. With the collective apology, the ‘great men’ doing the apologizing are able to take the credit of re-dedicating the society to its already stated goals, yet the society’s goals and values are redefined through the apology process itself.

2.6.3. The interaction of organizers, broadcasters, and audience

Media events have three partners: the organizers, the broadcasters and the audience -- and Dayan and Katz (1992) recognize that the meaning of the event is a negotiation between these three agents (pp. 54, 55). In Hall’s (1973) terms, the organizers and broadcasters may have control over the encoding of the event, but they cannot control the audiences’ decoding. Organizers and the audience rely on the tacit social knowledge of audiences to interpret media events, meaning that the audience is involved in an active process of interpretation incorporating their own specific knowledge of cultural symbols with the images and information presented to create their own
narrative specific to each individual. This is particularly true of the apology process which does not make explicit the religious symbols and cultural processes, such as re-covenanting, which it draws upon.

As Kim Christian Schroder (2007) notes, both media producers and consumers bring their own life experiences and the collective histories of their social groups into communicative tasks. Schroder’s investigation into decoding of ads describes how media consumer’s own “communicative repertoires manifest themselves and explains that, not only do media consumers produce meaning from the visual and verbal signs that are “there” but also from ones that aren’t “there” (p. 79). They note that television directors are always looking for situations that offer a synecdoche of the entire event. By shifting the focus of the coverage from explicit statements to visual cues, audience members become active interpreters of the meaning of the event. This, at once, allows them hermeneutic pleasure (p.88) while allowing for interpretative freedom and the possibility of counter-readings by audience members. Following this, my analysis pays attention to the visual cues such as physical space, costumes, and body language contained in the media coverage.

It is important to realize that news reports of the apology will take into account the narrative of the apology. When attempting a narrative analysis, one must constantly be aware of the subject of study. While earlier scholars such as Propp (cited in Gulich and Quasthoff, 1985, p. 172) restricted their analysis of narrative to the text alone, I analyze both the text itself and the act of telling the story. Factors that I took into account included the relationship of the narrator to the audience and the situation in which the narration take place.

Though this thesis analyzes both the apology itself and the news media coverage of the event as, in today’s media saturated public sphere, the meaning of the event is its media presentation. However, it is important to note that this study is limited to the apology and its media coverage and does not explore audience decoding of the apology apart from the analysis of editorials and commentaries in the media itself.
2.6.4. Framing: A Conscious or Unconscious Process?

A frame can be defined as the elements of a narrative which encourage us to develop a particular understanding of events (1991, p.7; quoted in Robinson, p. 531). Frames help us render events meaningful and thereby organize our experiences and guide our actions (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). In the field of media analysis, the issue of whether framing is a largely unconscious or conscious process is controversial. Political scientists Tom Nelson, Rosalie Oxley and Zoe Clawson (1997) note that from the spin following political debates to the stage-crafting of press conferences, elites (members of the totem domain) spend a considerable amount of time, effort and money on how information is presented (p.224). However, they also note that the framing of an issue by news media is not necessarily an “overt attempt at persuasion or manipulation[.]” media coverage of issues must be selective as not all known information can possibly be presented (p.236). They insist that frames bridge the gap between elite discourse and popular understanding of an issue by concisely presenting complex issues (p. 237). In acting as the realm of the public sphere which conveys the view of the sphere of authority to the citizens, the people and institutions which make up the media may be trying to follow norms of impartiality, but “they cannot escape the fact that the approach to a story implicitly teaches the public how to understand the central issue” (p. 236). Moreover, journalists are not immune to their own biases and the naturalization of hegemony; they both self-censor and unconsciously view and present events through the lens of the ruling social and political elites (Robinson, 2001, p. 525).

On the other hand, some theorists (Reese; cited in Konig, n.d.) have gone so far as to suggest that framing is always a conscious process. McAdams (1996, cited Karagiannis, 2009), defines framing as “the conscious, strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and themselves that create collective identities, influence public discourse and legitimize and motivate collective action” [my emphasis]. Similarly, what is sometimes referred to as the “manufacturing consent” thesis states that the primary function of the media is to encourage support for the policy choices of the elite (Chomsky and Herman; Hammond and Herman; Herman; all cited in Robinson, 2001, p. 542).
What is clear is that frames, whether consciously created by policy makers and media producers or not, depend on interplay with the unconscious knowledge of audience members. While agenda setting is the process of deciding which issues get on the news, and is therefore a conscious process, framing is a more delicate process that encourages audiences to understand an issue in a particular way. But, unlike advertisers, whose use of cultural symbols and meaning systems in order to sell products is “undoubtedly intentional” (Barthes; cited in Goldman, 1992, p. 40), this conscious effort is not so clear with regards to all framing. My analysis finds the middle ground of the debate as to whether framing is a conscious or unconscious process by treating framing as an often conscious but more frequently unconscious structuring device. This view of framing is key to this thesis as I do not examine whether frames were intentionally created or not, but rather, how the existing cultural narrative of re-covenanting was revealed in the frames used by politicians and the media.

As cultural theorist Baldwin Van Gorp (cited in Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) points out, framing is a process based in and bound by culture. Frames are never constructed from scratch (Konig, n.d.) but draw on existing cultural codes. Whereas the hypodermic-needle model of communication once assumed that the media was able to inject information into audiences, this model is long-outdated. In the study of advertising, it has long been acknowledged that advertisers “convert the ‘raw material’ of already existent meaning systems into hybrid meaning systems that suit their particular purposes” (Williamson; cited in Goldman, 1992, p. 38). That is to say, advertisers use the cultural symbols which are always-already endowed with meaning by audiences to imbue novel objects with meaning in order to create new narratives. This is an extremely similar process to what I see at work in the framing of the apology where the familiar narrative of re-covenanting is replayed. Sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow (2000) argue that a frame must also have “narrative fidelity” (p.622); it must resonate with cultural narratives or what Campbell would call “myths” (cited in Benford and Snow, p. 622). They argue that, for a frame to resonate, it must tap into cultural narratives, ideologies, practices (p. 624, 629), all of which belong to a “metaphorical tool kit” (Swidler, 1986, cited on p. 629).

As Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) state, “frames operate by activating information already at recipients’ disposal [that are] stored in long-term memory” (p.225).
Frames bring past experiences and emotion to mind and add additional weight to issues (p. 237). The Harper apology itself and its media coverage was framed in such a way to remind audiences of the meaning systems and endow new situations and actors with those meanings. The known narrative of re-covenanting was used to imbue meaning onto this novel situation of the collective, meditated public apology.

It is also important to note, as discussed above, that framing works with prior knowledge. This goes against the common sense assumption that the less an individual knows about an issue, the more likely they are to be influenced by news media coverage of the issue. As experiments on the framing of the issue of welfare by Nelson, Oxley and Clawson (1997) demonstrate, awareness of the issue does not make one immune to the impact of framing. In fact, they found that those who were more knowledgeable concerning issues related to welfare were more apt to be influenced by the media frame in which the information was presented (p.234). Such research on framing has great importance on who will be influenced by particular kinds of messages and their presentation (Nelson, Oxley and Clawson, p. 24). Although my own brief study of media framing will not be examining who was influenced by these frames, Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson’s study is important as it somewhat counter-intuitively suggests that those who are knowledgeable about the residential schools as well as the themes of re-covenanting are even more receptive to the effects of media framing.

I began this chapter by noting the etymology of the word apology and how it has changed from a defense to an expression of remorse and a promise of a better future. Perhaps because of this promise, despite its complications, the collective apology has proliferated. This proliferation speaks to the nature of liberal democracies and the importance of national narrative. National narratives are spread through the media, and, following Dayan and Katz’s (1992) theory of media events, we are able to understand how a secular ritual such as a public apology can have both hegemonic and transformative power. Through the apology we are able to undo the wrongs of the past and rededicate ourselves to broken covenants, mending them and redefining our relationships to our beliefs and values.
3. Theoretical Underpinnings: Re-covenanting

Here are the steps

In the Iron Law of History

That welds Order and Sacrifice

Order leads to Guilt

(For who can keep the commandments!)

Guilt needs Redemption

(For who would not be cleansed!

Redemption needs Redeemer

(Which is to say, a victim!)

Order

Through Guilt

To victimage (Hence: Cult of the Kill)…

(Burke, 1970, pp. 4-5)

Now that the terms used in this thesis have been defined and their historical context explored, I begin to lay the theoretical foundations of my analysis of Stephen Harper’s apology for the Indian Residential School system and its media coverage. In the beginning of the last chapter, I noted how notions of apology and forgiveness do not
make sense in perfectionist systems of ethics, such as that of the ancient Greeks, and argued that it is only with the belief that humans are flawed that these notions come to have moral value. I begin this chapter by discussing the idea of flawed nature of our existence -- its origins and its consequences -- in more detail. I go on to explain the human need for narrative, particularly in response to these feelings of ubiquitous guilt and how Burke’s “cult of the kill” allows us to escape from our ubiquitous guilt which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter. Most critically, I discuss the cycle of order, pollution, sacrifice and restoration which is the framework I use in the fourth chapter to analyze the apology itself.

3.1. In the Beginning: The Creation of the Sin and the Cycle of Redemption

Human beings around the globe have always felt that things aren’t quite right; our relationship to others, the environment, time, even our own bodies, is just somehow wrong. There is an ineffable sense that things should in some way be more unified. We have attempted to explain this feeling of disunity with theories as varied as cosmological notions of the Fall from Eden to developmental psychological explanations of the infant’s individuation from the mother. Literary theorist and philosopher Kenneth Burke argues that this feeling of division is a function of language itself; logologically, whenever one term is divided into classifications, there is a fall from a “vision of perfect oneness” (1970, p. 175). He argues that a fall into division is implicit in the notion of creation “insofar as the Creation was a kind of ‘divisiveness,’ setting up different categories of things which could be variously at odds with one another and which accordingly lack the proto-Edenic simplicity of absolute unity” (p. 174).

Burke argues that just as language creates this division; it also creates sin and disobedience. Beings within a pre-linguistic state of nature are innocent because they cannot technically disobey commands as they have no language to understand those commands (1970, p. 186); thus, just as Bentham points out that it is only the law that can make crime, and Augustine states that it is only the law that can make sin (Burke,
in the Burkean logic, it is, even more fundamentally, language which creates sin as it allows for the understanding of the law which allows for disobedience\textsuperscript{11}. This is Burke’s “theory of the ethical negative” or “theory of ethical linguistics” (Carter, 1996, p. 4).

Key to this theory is the idea of the human desire for absolute perfection. Just as humans have always recognized that things ‘aren’t quite right’, we have struggled to make them right. Indeed, according to Burke (1966), one of the most fundamental characteristics of humanity is that we are “rotten with perfection” (p. 16): because of the fact that we can imagine perfection we are never satisfied with anything less than it. As perfection, by definition, is unattainable, we are never satisfied with our present condition. In terms of Burke’s theory of the ethical negative, our desire for perfection means that we are constantly drawn to create broader and broader categories as our ethical categories are never good enough. He argues that our desire for perfection eventually drives us to place everything into either a positive or negative ethical category. Eventually, these linguistic motives lead us to construct a system of commandments (ethical imperatives) so complex that no one could possibly follow it. The result of this inability to follow all the commandments is a sense of “ubiquitous guilt” (p. 5) – what is more commonly referred to in the protestant West as original sin. Because of the fact that we can imagine a perfect ethical system, we will always be disappointed by anything less than this perfection, leading to this ubiquitous guilt. Because of our condition of being trapped inside a web of commandments, we begin to think of everything in terms of obedience and disobedience. The only way that we are able to reconnect with the time before we constructed this ethical system is through the cycle of the “the cult of the kill”: the cycle of order, pollution, sacrifice, and restoration of the order, which I see in terms of Abrabamic re-covenanting and the more universal process of totem regeneration. Just as Arendt argued that apology and forgiveness allows us to escape from finality of our actions and their unknowable consequences, we

\textsuperscript{11} To better explain his often difficult to follow logic, Burke (1970, p. 175) works through the terms in the reverse order to help us understand how one implies the other. He begins with punishment, noting that any concept of punishment implies the concept of an infraction which has made the punishment relevant. In the idea of infraction there is, of course, an implied set of conditions. Burke then argues that from this set of conditions, the notion of a first set of conditions, which would imply a creation which allowed for the disobedience.
are only able to escape from the ubiquitous guilt caused by our unachievable moral system via a similar process. In my analysis of Stephen Harper’s apology for the residential school system, I see how the escape which both Burke and Arendt spoke of was attempted via a narrative of re-covenanting. The narrative of re-covenanting followed the cycle of Burke’s (1962) cult of the kill, substituting the humiliation of the apology for the sacrifice, to mend the broken covenant and escape from the “predicament of irreversibility”. In the next section, I discuss our need for narrative in general and, more specifically, the significance of Burke’s cycle: order, pollution, sacrifice and redemption. I expand upon how this cycle allows us to re-covenant through apology thus returning to the unity before the transgression occurred and escape from our feelings of disunity and ubiquitous guilt.

3.1.1. The need for the narrative of Order, Pollution, Sacrifice, and Redemption

Canadian literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye explains how creating narratives enables us to, “recapture, in full consciousness, that original sense of identity with our surroundings,” (cited in Carter, 1996, p. 49) referencing Burke in saying that, in order to make sense of our history, humans create “fictive concerns, with origins and ends such as give meaning to lives and poems” (cited in Carter, p. 52). Burke explains that human beings have a tendency to make the present condition the result of past events. We imagine that in the distant past, there was an Eden of total oneness, a golden age of the prophets, a time when the spirit world and the earthly world were united, a Dreamtime before the cracking of the cosmic egg. Because of the fact that our perfectionist linguistic system has trapped us inside a web of commandments which we cannot always follow, we think that it is our disobedience of this system that has caused this feeling of ubiquitous guilt and disunity, we invent a fall from the Edenic unity, we blame our feeling of ubiquitous guilt, not rightly on the characteristics of our drive for categorical perfection, but on an ancestral crime; thus creating the first two stages of the narrative of order, pollution, sacrifice and redemption. In the Christian tradition, this is the doctrine of original sin. Our common ancestor, Adam, did something so terrible that his guilt is passed down from generation to generation; thus, we must live, fallen, in this present state of disunified non-perfection. Burke recognized that such origins, though
they permeate our culture with notions of a cause and effect for our current, disunified condition, are “less the cause of subsequent failures than a symbol of failure in retrospect” (Carter, p.32).12

Yet, we do not realize that our lack of unity is a result of our drive for perfection and our need to explain our current condition through a logical, though mythic narrative. Instead, we attempt to rectify our condition and return to the state of unity from which we fell, using the same method which got us into trouble in the first place: language, which is entwined in this drive for perfection. Burke warns us about this desire to create narratives to explain our current condition in stating that, “the search for a cause is itself the search for a scapegoat, as Adam blames Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, the serpent could have blamed Lucifer, and Lucifer could have blamed the temptations implicit in the idea of Order” (1970, p. 191). Countless religious historians, anthropologists and sociologists have discussed the rituals we create to assign such blame (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1995; Eliade, 1965; Frazer, 1890/1993; Girard 1977, 2001). The most powerful of these rituals is the sacrifice of the scapegoat in an attempt to expel sin and return to the lost unity.

Most of us are familiar with the ancient Hebrew practice of confessing the sins of the community to a goat, then casting the goat into the desert, leaving the community free of sin (Leviticus 16). The Hebrew term la-aza’zeyl, commonly translated as scapegoat, literally means “the sender away (of sins)”. Historians note that this practice goes back to at least the 24th century BCE (Zatelli, 1998, p.245 - 263). The story of the two goats brought into the courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem at Yom Kippur illustrates the difference between sacrifice and scapegoating which I alluded to in the Introduction to this thesis. On the day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the High Priest cast

12 Expanding on our tendency to create narrative, Burke argues that we also define things alternatively as a “statement of the thing’s source or beginnings” or, “narratively in terms of its fulfillment or fruition”. He states, “the ultimate of such definition being perhaps the use of ‘bastard’ as an epitaph to describe a man’s character’ (1962, p. 13, quoted in Carter, 1996, p. 33). Burke refers to this phenomenon as the “time essence ambiguity as it is reflected in the realm of the Symbolic” (p. 439, quoted in Carter, p. 34). He argues that this allows for both a linear and timeless relationship between incidents in a narrative which allows for them all to be collapsed into philosophical first principles (Carter, p. 36). More pointedly, Burke argues that we “resort to myth” in order to justify the current social order (1966, p. 364-365, cited in Carter, p. 40)
lots for two goats: one was given as a burnt offering while the other took on the sins of the community and was sent out into the wilderness (Leviticus 16: 22). What is important to note here is that, unlike the current, popular usage of the term, a scapegoat is not simply an innocent victim, rather, the scapegoat symbolically takes on the sins of the community so that that community can be cleansed and order can be restored.

Of course, the people of the ancient middle-east were fond of sacrificing more than just goats; one of the most important myths of western civilization, the tale of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22), is a reference to the ancient Semitic practice of sacrificing the first born son to the tribal god. Mircea Eliade recognized that ritual murder was an unfortunate necessity for the continuation of the cycle of life for thousands of years across a large proportion of human cultures; his History of Religious Ideas lists examples of human sacrificial rites from the ancient Chinese to Vedic Indians; to European Druids and Mesoamericans, (cited in Carter p. 84); while Sir James George Frazer (p.578) informs us of how, in Ancient Greece, a beggar or cripple, referred to as the pharmakos, was killed or driven out of the community in times of crisis such as famine, plague or invasion (Frazer, 1890/1993, p. 578).

Kenneth Burke goes so far as to say that in performing “the role of vicarious atonement,” the scapegoat mechanism “serves as the overall category for all human relations” (cited in Carter,1996, p. 83). Scapegoating is the key component of the most important mythology of western civilization, The Bible, as, according to Exodus, no relationship with the Judeo-Christian god is possible without constant cleansing through the cycle of sacrifice, forgiveness and restoration (Scofield; cited in Burke, 1970, p.224).

Burke’s explanation of the scapegoat mechanism can be simplified to a cycle of “order, pollution, guilt, purification, redemption” (Shultz, 2000, p. 169). In his Rhetoric of Religion, Burke (1970) gives this more complex explanation of his general theories using the Old Testament as an example:

One can start with the creation of a natural order (though conceiving it as infused with a verbal principle): one can next proceed to an idea of innocence untroubled by thou-shalt-not’s, one can next introduce a thou-shalt-not; one can depict a new Covenant propounded on the basis of this violation, and with capital
punishment; one can later introduce the principle of sacrifice... Then gradually thereafter, more and more clearly, come the emergence of the turn from mere sacrifice to the idea of outright redemption by victimage.

(Burke, 1970, p. 216)

Shultz (2000) explains that this narrative, which involves themes of “transgression stigma, banishment, purification, and ideally redemption, is a means of restoring faith in institutional and ideological hierarchies” (p. 171). According to Burke’s logic, we order our societies by creating symbolic hierarchies which are maintained not only through institutions, but also through stories and narratives (Shultz p. 171). When we reject traditional hierarchies, we experience guilt and must find a sacrifice to purge our guilt and feel redeemed, inventing morality plays (Shultz, p. 172) to purify the pollution and assigning guilt to an ‘Other’ to act as a vessel for sin. In casting out the one who bears the burden of our sins, the group can feel relieved of evil, at least temporarily (Carter, 1996, p. 18). In short, the scapegoat mechanism allows us to return to our original state before the transgression occurred.

To illustrate how familiar this model actually is, let us imagine a village in the distant past which suddenly became cursed by a sexually transmitted disease. There was an established Order: monogamous marriages, which was Rejected and thus became Polluted. To cleanse the community, the village elders find someone to blame for tempting men and causing disease, putting the burden of the community’s sins on to her and she is stoned to death. Lo and behold, after the woman is stoned the community is unified. The women have wailed and thrown stones with their husbands at this common enemy. They have become united once again in the act of Sacrifice: the Order has been restored. Indeed the order has been restored to such a degree that it seems as though the stoning of the woman, the scapegoat herself, magically caused the rebirth of the community. The process is not recognized as causing the unity, but rather, the scapegoat alone is seen as the cure for the troubles. The community is unified through the narrative of the scapegoat who is then seen to have the divine healing power to unify the community.

But this example was just a temporary cure for a minor Pollution of the Order. There needs to be a cure for the fundamental Pollution of the Order that has made it all
wrong: a cure for The Fall. The perfect sin, of course, demands the perfect sacrifice. Christianity found the answer in god sending the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, to atone for Adam’s ultimate sin of disobedience through death. When Jesus was killed, it united the believers to such an extent that it proved he was god. And just as the early 20th century legal scholar Schmitt noted that, for many in the west, the state had replaced the church as the site of transcendence, early 21st century legal scholar Paul Khan explains the nation has become the site for sacrifice. Indeed, it is the fact that the state has become the most appropriate place of sacrifice which proves that it is a place of transcendence (noted in Cayley, 2012). In this case, what form would this perfect sacrifice take if it were to pay for the original sin of a nation? The head of the nation must be sacrificed for the nation to be unified once again. In the next section, I explore Burke (1959, 1962, 1970) and Girard's (1977, 1987, 2001) notion of the head of the community as the substitute sacrifice of the community as a whole by introducing the Durkheimian (1912/1992) notion of the totem as a symbol of the group’s commitment to itself. I show how, through the sacrifice of the totem leader, the community as a whole is cleansed and can thus redefine its values and identity in a process of re-covenanting.

3.1.2. The Concept of the Totem

Though he did not deal with politics to the extent that he examined myths and literature, Burke noted that, logologically, “the idea of ‘Lord’ (or Master) applies equally to supernatural and worldly governance.” Burke openly asks what happens to our need for a “Sacrificial King” in the “era of Post-Christian science” (1962, p. 31; Carter, 1996, p. 25), speculating that “for a purely worldly order of motives, we should expect a correspondingly worldly kind of ‘defilement,’ with its call for a correspondingly worldly need of cleansing by sacrifice” (1970, p. 224). As the French Romantic Nationalist Michelet wrote, “my noble country, you must take the place of the god who escapes us” (quoted in Babik, 2006, p. 379). Whereas theorists such as Girard (1977, 1987, 2001) point out that the ultimate religious scapegoat, capable of forming a whole new covenant and washing away original sin, is god himself (as exemplified by Jesus Christ), in a secular context the ultimate community scapegoat must be the god of the community: its totem in whatever form it takes.
I take the notion of the totem as the centre of the cult from Durkheim (1912/1995) who theorized that the totem was the ultimate symbol of the group’s commitment to itself. Durkheim argued that the profane routines of daily life weaken the commitments of the group and hence the power of the totem. He argued that for societies to overcome their individualistic tendencies, they must continually come together in ritual to recreate themselves, thus regenerating the power of the totem. What is implied is that participants in such rituals become “more committed to shared beliefs and institutions of their respective communities after such participation than they were before” (Etzioni, 2000. p. 47). In regenerating the totem, the group regenerates itself, redefining and strengthening its own identity and values in a new covenant.

Though Durkheim (1912/1995) did refer to the totem as the “flag” of primitive societies, he was hesitant to apply the concept in reverse; that is, he never stated that flags or other symbols of nations had totemic qualities. However, national politicians have never shied from using Durkheimian concepts to describe the nation. In his inaugural speech, Lyndon Johnson pronounced that America was a nation of “believers who believed in themselves” (cited in Marvin and Ingle, 1999, p. 18). Inadvertently or not, Johnson was making the Durkheimian pronouncement that nations are defined as worshipping the totem of themselves.

Recently, several theorists have attempted to map the Durkheimian notions of the totem onto post-industrial societies with updated references to Bellah’s (1967) notion of civil religion. Adding the theories of Rene Girard to traditional Durkheimian scholarship, communications theorist Carolyn Marvin and clinical psychologist David W. Ingle (1996, 1999) argue that national identity is built on sacrifice. They argue that secular, nationalist religions “organize killing energy by committing devotees to sacrifice themselves to the group” (1996, p. 767). Agreeing with theorists such as Dayan and Katz (1992), Marvin and Ingle see the media as the most important propagator of this civil religion and its totem rituals. They rightly argue that:
the familiar claim that a religious view of the world is characterized by a
moral opposition to violence ignores a more complex reality in which
faiths that most deeply bind the commitment of devotees are structures
for organizing killing energy. This is true both for religions that
aggressively kill the ‘other’ in the name of a deity or deities and those that
pledge their devotees to self-sacrifice when confronted with violence.”

(Marvin & Ingle, 1996, p.768)

Marvin and Ingle (1999, pp. 6 – 8) theorize that totem rituals are played out in
domains. The totem domain is comprised of politicians and the armed forces that are
charged with protecting the totem. In Habermasean (1989) terms, this is “the sphere of
public authority.” Marvin and Ingle (1999) argue that the totem domain must offer
sacrifices to the totem in order to keep it alive: soldiers sacrifice their own lives and
politicians symbolically sacrifice themselves through rituals such as elections in which
they are humiliated in hopes of being born again, regenerated. Citizens occupy the
popular domain and help to maintain the totem through fertility rather than sacrifice. The
affiliative domain is made up of groups who contend that they represent the society, as it
ought to be, and may even oppose the totem: affiliative groups can be thought of in
more familiar contemporary sociological terms as subaltern counterpublics. Marvin and
Ingle give examples as varied as the KKK, the Black Panthers, the Hell’s Angels,
Quakers, and Freemasons as affiliative groups in the USA. In his response to the
apology, Phil Fontaine states that “we [First Nations] are and always have always been
an indispensable part of the Canadian identity. Our peoples, our history and our present
being the essence of Canada. The attempts to erasure our identities... impoverished the
character of this nation” (“Response of Phil Fontaine”, 2008). I see the First Nations as

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our most important affiliative group in Canada; though they sometimes may oppose the totem, they also present themselves, at least themselves in the historical past, as representing the society as it ought to be, with a healthier respect for the community, elders, and the environment.

As Eliade (1965, p. 11) notes, while the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors took possession of land in the name of Jesus Christ, the English took possession in the name of the King or Queen of their nation. Combine this with Robspierre's pronouncement that in order for France to be reborn, Louis XVI must die (Cayley, 2011) and one realizes that in looking for a totem leader of the English and French settler-state of Canada, we must not turn to an overtly religious totem, but to the ruler of the secular nation. For contemporary political theorists such as Marvin and Ingle, in post-industrial societies, this ritual of the killing of the totem is generally not completed through death but rather accomplished through the humiliation of the totem domain leader via election campaigns or, as I argue, the more recent phenomenon of public apologies. This scapegoating of the totem domain leader is necessary for the purification through regeneration of the essence of the nation and thus, complete re-covenanting to rebuild and maintain a national identity through the cycle of order, pollution, sacrifice, and redemption.

In this section I have tied Durkheimian notions of totem regeneration through the sacrifice of the totem leader to Burke's rhetorical cycle of the Cult of the Kill and the scapegoat. In addition, I addressed how these ancient universal cycles, and particularly scapegoating, are addressed in the current media age with relation to Dayan and Katz (1996) theory of media events and Marvin and Ingles’ (1996, 1999) exploration of totems and nationalism. In the next section, I expand on the issue of defining identity in opposition to the scapegoat and its relation to the project of re-covenanting.

3.1.3. **Defining Identity in Opposition to the Scapegoat**

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (cited in Burke, 1966), Freud laid great importance on the processes of “condensation” and “displacement.” Burke (1966) extends this work to focus on not just dreams, but all of our symbolic communications.
Burke saw Freudian displacement as simply a confused form of substitution. To explain the ubiquitousness of substitution, Burke gives the examples of translating languages or systems such as Fahrenheit to Centigrade and wittily states that “we can paraphrase a statement; if you don’t get it one way, we can try another way” (p.7). Burke even saw “penance, expiation, compensation, paying of fines in lieu of bodily punishment, and the cult of the scapegoat” all as different forms of the symbolic act of substitution.

For Burke (1962), the scapegoat, as the part which takes on the burden of the whole, must be “profoundly consubstantial with those who, looking upon it as a chosen vessel, ritualistically cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it” (p. 406). The group must first identify with the victim in order to cast him/her out of their ranks after having burdened their sins upon him/her. It is through this process that the lines of identification are redrawn to exclude the scapegoat. As Burke explains:

We have here: (1) original state of merger, in that the iniquities are shared by both the iniquitous and their chosen vessel; (2) a principle of division, in that the elements shared in common are being ritualistically alienated; (3) a new principle of merger, this time in the unification of those whose purified identity is defined in dialectical opposition to the sacrificial offering. (Burke, 1962, p. 406)

We see that just as the scapegoat is chosen from the group, it also serves to maintain and enhance the group’s coherent identity: there is a symbolic need for the unity found through a common foe (1962, p. 408; quoted in Carter, 1996, p. 21). As Carter explains, the function of the scapegoating ritual is “to recruit allies who name things in the same polarized terms as we do and agree upon who should be the victims and who the victimizers. We bring all the rhetorical resources of a story to our efforts to define ourselves against a common foe,” (Carter, p. 48). Carter sees the Burkean scapegoat as a “fulcrum around which pivot self-justifying identification and separation” (p. 18)

Drawing on Burke, controversial French historian and philosopher Rene Girard also pays particular attention to the fact that rituals of vilification are a way for the group to form an identity in contrast to the “other” (cited in Ivie, 2007, p. 238). Whereas Durkheim (1912/1995) saw group disintegration as a more passive occurrence which arose from the solitary nature of mundane tasks, for Girard, hostility actively threatened
group solidarity and the only way to save the community was through the process of scapegoating. He argues that in very long conflicts, the original reason for the conflict is forgotten, and factions then choose an arbitrary scapegoat as the cause. Everyone can then realign themselves in opposition to this scapegoat, not each other. In his own, extreme way, Girard is a true Durkheimian, arguing that the ritual victim acts like a magnet pulling in the scattered iron fillings of individuals into a cohesive group (Cayley, 2011).

Burke referred to this process as the “dialectic of the scapegoat”. He claims that this dialectic could be seen from the beginning of civilization right up to the present day, citing examples of the scapegoating of “Jews, foreigners, Negroes, ‘isms’, etc.” (cited in Carter, 1996, p. 19). Yet Burke did not see scapegoating as some kind of remnant of an earlier age; instead, he saw the process as a device intrinsic to the language-using animal. He followed Aristotle’s rhetorical analysis seeing antithesis as an “exceptionally effective rhetorical device... giving dramatic saliency and at least apparent clarity to any issue” (1966, p.19). As he writes, “one may find himself hard put to define a policy purely in its own terms, but one can advocate it persuasively by an urgent assurance that it is decidedly against such and such” (1966, p. 19). In a modern context, he notes how often leaders will deflect domestic criticism by focusing animosity on the evils of another country’s policies (1966, p.19). Thus, “antithesis helps reinforce unification by scapegoat” (1966, p. 19). Burke notes that our need for unification through a common enemy, is, “reducible to the antithetical nature of dialectical [and diacritical] terms... that derive their significance from their relations to opposite terms” (cited in Carter, p. 21).

In Burke’s “theory of linguistic diacritics” (or “principle of the social diacritics of identity”), we define ourselves against others, just as we define terms, through opposites (cited in Carter, 1996, p. 138). Just as structuralists view words as pairs of binary oppositions, Burke views our own identities as oppositional word-constructions (Carter, p. 138). We build personal and groups identities through words in opposition to others

13 C. Allen Carter (1996) eloquently sums up Burke’s view of the deep roots of the mechanism to humanity and linguistics by stating that, “When alphabets are tossed in the air, they are likely to land in the pattern of a scapegoat” (Carter, p. 109).
and other groups through sets of opposing terms (Carter, p. 6). As Carter states, “we constantly place ourselves with ‘this’ and separate ourselves from ‘that’ (p. 6). Burke repeatedly stresses the importance of the negative in identity formation. He notes that etymologically the word country comes from contra meaning “over against” (1966, p. 423): we are united as a nation by what we oppose.

Moreover, these opposing terms are ethically charged, always implying that one ought to be this way and not that way (Carter, 1996, p. 7), black or white, wrong or right. In addition, in keeping with his linguistic theory of perfectionism, we are constantly striving for the perfection of these opposing terms. As noted earlier, our drive for perfection eventually leads us to place everything on one or the other side of the equation; with us or against us. We even place god on one-side, assumedly, our side, leading to the idea that we are god’s chosen people (Carter, p. 7). According to Burke’s colleague, friend and mentee William H. Reuckert, the theory of ethical negatives leads us into a covenant defined by terms which no one can keep; this, in turn, leads to the cycle of purging and redemption (Carter, p. 13): the order is so complex that it is constantly being broken, bringing about a need for cleansing through sacrifice of a scapegoat in order for the order to be restored.

As discussed in the Introduction, in including an extensive list of past sins, as Stephen Harper did in his apology for the residential schools, the apologizer is actually providing the community with a list of ‘thou-shalt-nots’. As the perfect scapegoat for the sins of the community is the leader of the community, s/he becomes our Moses, presenting us with a new covenant.

### 3.1.4. Words as medicine

At the foundation of the apology process and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions around the world is the belief in the medicinal power of words. Despite the modern associations, the idea of talk therapy did not begin with Freud. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates discusses the curative power of rhetoric while Gorgias compares the effects of speech on the soul to the power of drugs on the body (cited in Woods, 2009, p.4). In *Philosophy of Literary Form* (cited in Woods, p.5), Burke refers to poets as “medicine
men” dishing out spiritual and homeopathic cures. He described the effect of words on the body itself, noting, “both drugs and poetry can be figured as transformative substances… both induce affective change, and both tap into bodily rhythms, creating and increasing receptivity” (cited in Woods, p. 7).

Communications theorist Carley S. Woods (2009) argues that, like Freud, Burke believed that talk therapy could cure ills (p. 7); however, where Freud dealt with the personal, Burke dealt with the social. It is obvious that talk-therapies for both social and personal ills is common in Canada in general, as evidence by psychologists, counselors, twelve-step groups, etc., but it should also be noted that Indigenous Canadians have a tradition of using words as medicine to heal not just the individual, but society. Aside from the practices of chanting and shamanistic incantations, Jo -Ann Epiniskew, Metis Professor of English at the First Nations University argues that, “not only does Indigenous literature respond to and critique the policies of the Government of Canada, it also functions as ‘medicine’ to help cure the colonial contagion by healing the communities that these policies have injured” (cited in Henderson and Wakeham, 2009). Often occurring in conjunction with the apology process, the most well known of the modern attempts at using words to heal a sick society is that of the Truth Commission, also a form of catharsis. As Martha Minow (1998) notes, in citing a common a truism: “Know the truth and it will set you free, expose the terrible secrets of a sick society and heal that society” (p. 66).

However, Burke also noted the power of the orator not as healer but as charlatan. It is not coincidental that both A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives were published on the eve of the McCarthy era (Carter, 1996, p. xiv). In “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle”, Burke refers to the scapegoating of the Jews as “snake-oil for the social ills of Europe pre-WWII” (cited in Wood, 2000, p. 8). In Philosophy of Literary Form, Burke notes how Hitler’s scapegoating of the Jews was consistent with the Greek pharmakon: it performed “purification through dissociation” (cited in Woods, p. 8). Burke believed that reading Mein Kampf could serve as an inoculation against a dictator arising in the United States (Eddy, p. 64; cited in Woods, p.9), a vaccination for the masses against the snake oil of fascist rhetoric.
3.2. Canada’s Original Sin

Particularly in comparison to our neighbors to the south, Canadians have much to be smug about. As Maclean’s Magazine brags, we are richer than Americans, live longer than the Swedes, and have more lovers than the Italians (Gatehouse, 2009). But we have one national shame -- the status of our aboriginal people. Aboriginal people’s life expectancy is between 5 and 8 years less than the Canadian national average (“Life Expectancy”, 2010), aboriginals are three times more likely to commit suicide (Kirmayer et al., 2007) and twice as likely to live in poverty (Collin & Jenson, 2009). In a country which boasts of equality among its citizen, this is a glaring inconsistency. No matter how much money we throw at this problem, it is not getting better. Following the Burkean logic of the natural human instinct to create a narrative to explain our current situation, we decide, not entirely wrongly, that our ancestors must have done something so terrible that we carry the guilt from generation to generation. Our history of colonization is our original sin and the most dreadful act of this colonization was stealing aboriginal children from their families. To improve our present situation and re-create unity within the nation, we must follow the universal, ancient cycle of order, transgression, sacrifice and restoration. We must pay for this sin with a sacrifice or its symbolic and functional equivalent: the humiliation of confession and apology. For the original sin of the nation, the sacrifice of a mere citizen is not sufficient; only by the sacrifice of the god of the secular religion can the original sin of the nation be paid for and all the citizens find unity in freedom from the burden of this sin. Only the head of the secular state, the representative of the nation itself, is a worthy and sufficient sacrifice. Through the humiliation of public confession and apology the representative of the nation provides a list of sins which become our thou-shalt nots and thus redefines and strengthens our national narrative of unity and commitment to human rights as embodied in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This chapter has laid out the complex interconnections of anthropological, historical, religious, rhetorical, and sociological theories which I now use as a framework to analyze Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology for the residential schools. I began by discussing the universal feeling of disunity and ubiquitous guilt that Burke argues are a product of our perfectionist linguistic system. Out of the human desire for a logical
narrative to explain these feelings, we created a “Fall” from an original unity and the need to repeat the cycle of order, transgression, sacrifice, and redemption in an attempt to regain the unity before the original transgression. I tied this Burkean cycle to the anthropological concept of the totem and the prime minister or president as the representative of the totem of the modern nation state. Following the Burkean logic, I argued that, in our times it is the head of the nation who must be sacrificed in order for the moral order to be restored as it existed before the transgression. With the help of the media event of the ritual of public humiliation through apology, the head of the nation lays out our sins and helps the nation to create a new covenant. I also noted how the entire apology process is founded on the notion of words as medicine. I finished this chapter by applying this narrative to Canada’s sin of the Indian Residential School system and the apology for that sin. It is through this complex web of interdisciplinary theories that I analyze this apology and its media coverage.
4. Analysis: From a Sad Chapter to a New Dawn

Religious theorist Walter Burkert (1987) notes that despite the use of empirical methods, all data in the humanities “remains [inside a] framework [of] the hermeneutical process that is ineradicably subjective” (p. 150). He argues that “an absolutely objective scientific theory would not be gratifying as long as we endeavor to “understand” the phenomena, to assimilate them into our own outlook on life” (p. 149). As media historian Roland Marchand (1985) asks in regards to his analysis of American ads between the 1920s and 1940s, “[o]f what value [is] a systemic analysis of the overt elements of advertising when subtle nuances often lay at the heart of their appeals? Almost by definition, nuances defy quantification and categorization” (p. xvi). I view this analysis of the framing of political communications in much the same way. The subtle, arguably subconscious allusions to shared cultural narratives and systems of meaning are often not measurable. For this reason, although this analysis is essentially a framing analysis of Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology for the Indian Residential School System and its media coverage, it is by no means an empirical study, replicable by other researchers. Instead, it is my own assimilation of the media texts, previous research on public apologies, and the sociological, rhetorical and anthropological theories covered in the last chapter. Creating meaning from texts is not a passive process; it requires active participation. Like the framing process itself, my interpretation is shaped by my own prior knowledge and understandings of cultural processes and narratives. With this caveat, I dive into the heart of this thesis: my findings of the key frames of Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology for the Indian residential schools and its media coverage. I will now explain how the apology and its media framing created a narrative of re-
covenanting which followed Burke’s cycle of order, transgression, sacrifice and return to order.\textsuperscript{14}

\subsection{Key Frames}

The following is an explanation of the key frames I found in my analysis of the apology and its media coverage. My exposition of the data follows Burke’s cycle of Order, Transgression leading to Pollution, Sacrifice leading to Redemption and Restoration of the Order which create a narrative of re-covenanting. I begin with a discussion of the revelation in the media that serious abuses had taken place within the residential schools. As noted in my discussion of media events, in terms of cultural narrative, the Order is not broken until it is reported by the media (Kampf, 2011). With Phil Fontaine’s revelation of his own abuse, the covenant had been broken and a sacrifice had to be made for it to be restored. In the previous chapters I thoroughly discussed how, universally, the only sufficient sacrifice to restore order for a serious violation of the covenant is that of the head of the nation, the representative of the totem itself. My analysis revealed that Canadians believed that this universal narrative must be followed, rejecting apologies which had been given by other government ministers.

In this chapter I first expound upon the concept of the apology as symbolic sacrifice and note the universal archetypes such as the Denouncer and the Carnival King who appeared in the media framing of the apology. I then discuss the processes by which the order is restored, including the granting of healing powers after the ritual of sacrifice and cleansing through catharsis. Perhaps the most common frame that I found in both the apology itself and its media coverage was that of splitting the cleansed nation from the sinning nation, a process which allows the essence of the nation to, paradoxically, return to the Order before the Transgression, and be reborn, cleansed, with its values redefined in a new covenant. I then discuss the evidence of the frames of rebirth, re-covenanting, and redemption, restoration of the order and national unity.

\textsuperscript{14} For those who are interested, a fuller explanation of my methodology, including the process of the selection of articles, the development of my coding scheme, and examples from the spreadsheet of my findings, please see Appendix B and C.
engendered by the media event of the apology. Finally, in addition to the data which I saw in the content analysis of these media texts, I also discuss what I did not see in the text, most importantly, the granting of forgiveness.

4.1.1. Revelation

In 1990, native leader Phil Fontaine revealed the extent of abuse that took place in the Indian residential schools to the stunned and previously ignorant Canadian public. In an interview with the iconic news anchor Barbara Frum, on the Canadian Broadcast Corporation prime time news show, The Journal, the native leader stated, ‘In my grade three class…if there were 20 boys, every single one of them…would have experienced what I experienced. They would have experienced some aspect of sexual abuse” (Frum and Fontaine, 1990). This interview marked the Transgression of the Order and the beginning of the cycle of re-covenanting.

Fontaine had been a leader in the native community since the seventies and by the time of the interview he had risen to the head of the assembly of Manitoba chiefs. During the interview, he called for an investigation into the abuse at residential schools, but, although the government agreed that an investigation was in order, neither the church nor the government instigated an investigation. However, in 1991, the government of Canada began a Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples in which many aboriginals told their stories of abuse in the residential school system. The report of this Royal Commission, published in 1996, recommended a separate public inquiry into the residential schools but this recommendation was never followed (“Did you Know?”, n.d.).

4.1.2. The Search for an Adequate Sacrifice

Despite ignoring the recommendation to conduct a public inquiry, in 1998, then-Minister of Indian affairs Jane Stewart offered an apology for the abuses at the residential schools and set up a 350 million dollar healing fund with 250 million dollars in additional resources for the victims. This apology stated:

The government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of physical and sexual abuse at
residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. For those of you who suffered this tragedy, we are deeply sorry. (Stewart, cited in Anderssen, 1998)

In *The Globe and Mail*, it was noted that this 1998 apology was “intended to mark a break from Ottawa’s past attempts to assimilate aboriginal people” (Anderssen, January 7, 1998), a statement in line with the 2008 apology’s attempt to separate Canada into a past, sinning nation and a cleansed, present nation, a strategy which will be discussed in later in this chapter. However, despite the fact this apology was commended by politicians and academics for its thoroughness in listing state abuses (ex. Gibney and Roxstrom, 2001, p. 930), it was not accepted because the apology did not come from the head of the state. As discussed in the previous chapter, for serious sins, the scapegoat must be more than a mere minister. Just as Christ, the embodiment of the church, had to die for redemption for the original sin of all Christians, for the original sin of the nation, colonization and subsequent child abuse, the god of the nation, the totem itself, embodied by its leader, must be sacrificed. To achieve redemption for the original sin of the nation, the sacrificial King, the head of the settler state is the only acceptable victim.

Yet, just having the correct victim is only a part of the many rules which must be followed for the ritual to be considered correct. For the re-covenanting process to be successful, not only the sacrifice, but the space in which it takes place must be sufficiently holy and solemn. Indo-Canadians were unhappy with the apology for the Komagata Maru incident because, though it was spoken by the sacrificial King -- Stephen Harper -- it took place in a mere park (“Indo-Canadians ‘deceived’”, 2011). Just as the Torah commands that sacrifices be made only in The Temple (Deuteronomy 16:16)\(^{15}\), the sacrifice could only happen in the secular Temple of Canada: The House of Commons. *Windspeaker*, Canada’s largest aboriginal newspaper, stated that survivors of the residential schools “have continually stressed the importance of hearing the prime minister say he’s sorry in *Parliament* [italic added]” (“Stephen Harper Will Issue”, 2008).

\(^{15}\) Jews stopped the practice of animal sacrifice because of the destruction of this temple: there is no longer a place to sacrifice.
Just before the apology was about to occur, Phil Fontaine heard rumours that the prime minister would deliver the apology on May 21 or 23, during a parliamentary break, and thus not in the House of Commons. In response to this rumour, Fontaine publicly stated that, “[t]he Prime Minister must rise in the house to present the apology to the country [italics added]” (“Fontaine Threatens to reject residential-school apology”, 2008). Just as Burke informs us, the cycle of order, pollution, sacrifice and rebirth which lead to the re-covenanting in the apology is an unending cycle. The re-covenanting must be repeated until perfection is achieved (which will, by definition, never occur). On June 11th, 2008, after years of lead up, the prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, offered himself as this symbolic sacrifice in the House of Commons, in another attempt to re-covenant after the pollution generated by the transgression of the Indian Residential School system.

**4.1.3. Symbolic sacrifice through humiliation: lowering to raise, killing to be born again**

In his ethnographic studies, Victor Turner (1969) identifies and discusses rituals of status reversal in which those of low status humiliate and degrade those in high status, giving examples such as the practice in some African societies of humiliating the future king immediately before he is throned (pp. 170 – 171). Turner argues that, with such rituals “[t]he implication is that for an individual to go higher on the status ladder, he must go lower than the status ladder” (p.170). We must keep in mind, as mentioned above, that in a Girardian twist, just as the scapegoat is made lower only to be deified in the end, the lowering of one’s status through apology can leads to an eventual elevation of one’s status. As Lazare (2004) points out, the word humiliation comes from the Latin “humus” meaning soil or ground (Lazare, p. 45). Through the process of apology, the offender is ritually humiliated, i.e. brought down in status. When we violate social norms, we apologize in order to restore our own feelings of “dignity, self-respect, and honor (p. 136): we lower ourselves in order to be raised in status in the eyes of the community. Like the prodigal son who is celebrated more than the son who remains, and the lost sheep that the Shepherd risks the rest of the flock to find, the one who sins is elevated beyond the level of those who have never sinned. As Christ says in the gospel of Luke, “I tell you that even so there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance” (Luke, 15:7 King
James Bible). Just as the sinner who repents finds himself more fêted than he/she who has not sinned, the one who is humiliated then confesses finds his/her status elevated beyond the pre-sinning state.

In terms of the king as the totem leader, humiliation serves the function of symbolically killing the totem so that it can be born again purer and stronger. The ritual of the national apology can most certainly be seen in this light. The totem --embodied by its head -- is insulted by the public, members of the totem domains, and finally the totem leaders, for it to be reborn cleansed of previous sin, greater than it was before. As Rene Girard (2001) notes, in myths from around the world, “the one who is lynched at the beginning of the myth… presides in the end over the reconstruction of this same system” (p. 65). In the ritual of the national apology, the leader and government are destroyed through humiliation, only to rule over the same system with reinvigorated legitimacy once the ritual is completed.

Like all rituals of scapegoating, such rituals serve to strengthen the group in opposition to the scapegoat. Founder of ethnomethodology, Harold Garfinkel (1956), calls the communicative work of lowering an individual’s identity through humiliation “status degradation ceremonies” (p. 420). He argues that, with the exception of societies which have been completely demoralized, this ritual is universally found and explains that these ceremonies reinforce group solidarity and can be seen as “a secular form of communion” (p. 421). He notes that:

Through the process of humiliation, the collective becomes more united in its own sacredness in opposition to the sinning, profane character of the one being degraded. Just as, through opposition to the scapegoat, the identity of the community is redefined and solidified, the totem values of the nation are consolidated and solidified by the denunciation of those who pollute it. (Garfinkel, 1965, p. 421)

The humiliation of the totem of Canada-past began years before Harper’s 2008 apology, with accusations of sexual abuse at residential schools, admission of wrong doings from churches, documents such as the 1998 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the 2006 class action deal, and the 2007 compensation package (“A Timeline”, 2010). In the lead up to the apology, the media humiliated the prime minister by presenting Harper as being bullied by First Nations people, arguably the lowest status
people in Canada. Headlines such as “Fontaine threatens to reject residential-school apology” (2008) insinuate that the head of the state could be threatened by the words of the leader of an affiliative domain. A quick search of titles of the articles analyzed which were published before the apology show a variety of sources ‘demanding’ an apology from the prime minister (e.g. “Opposition Demands apology for residential schools,” 2008; “Ex-students demand apology,” 2008; “First Nations Demand PM’s apology,” 2008; “Native Leader Demands,” 2007, etc). The prime minister is portrayed as being pushed around by other ministers, members of the opposition, and even ‘lowly’ First Nations people. In an article from The Globe and Mail article from March 2007 titled “Opposition Demands Apology for Residential Schools,” (2007) the lack of apology to date is called an “insulting betrayal”. In this article, the opposition “demands” to know why the prime minister “refuses to apologize for the atrocities suffered by these children” including the “unspeakable acts [which] were committed upon them”. This reference to the sexual abuse can be seen as an attempt to embarrass the prime minister, associating Harper with the unapologetic sexual abuse of children.

The culmination of the humiliation occurred on the day of the sacrifice itself, June 11th, 2008. The Globe and Mail reported that, on that day, leaders of the opposition “won applause with jabs at the Conservatives for refusing to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples” (Curry and Galloway, 2008). Jack Layton went so far as to call the government policy on residential schools “racist”, a near-taboo word in Canada. Phil Fontaine acknowledged the power of the humiliation by stating that “the telling of [the survivors’] painful stories [has] stripped white supremacy of its authority and legitimacy”; meanwhile, The Globe and Mail reported that Inuit leader Mary Simon stared defiantly at the prime minister, stating that her culture was still strong despite Canada’s attempts to kill it (Curry and Galloway, 2008).

The Carnival King

A common variant of the status degradation ritual is the ritual of status reversal. We see such status reversals in our own times with rituals and festivals such as pre-graduation “roasts” of faculty and administration by students, country fairs where sheriffs or mayors go in dunk-tanks, even holidays like Halloween where children ‘threaten’ adults for candy. Turner (1969) argues that “rituals of status reversal make visible in
their symbolic and behavioral patterns social categories and forms of grouping that are considered to be axiomatic and unchanging both in essence and in relationship to one another...cognitively, nothing underlines regularity so well as absurdity” (p. 176). A world-turned-upside-down for a short while serves to highlight the legitimacy of the usual social order. Often, in status reversal rituals, “the status deprived use superiors’ language and manner against those same superiors” (Pharr, 1992). We saw this is the formal speech and mannerisms of the indigenous leaders and residential school survivors who were admitted into the House of Commons to hear the apology. Moreover, Turner notes that during the liminal time of totem sacrifice before regeneration, a carnival king may be installed as the social order is turned over with slaves ruling over masters (p.57). Of all the images that accompanied the media coverage of the apology, the most repeated and also most memorable is that of Phil Fontaine in his traditional chiefly attire, such as that shown in Figure. As the head of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine becomes the perfect carnival king in his elaborate crown, the ceremonial feathered headdress of his tribe: a mock-totem leader from the affiliative domain in the world-turned-upside-down.

Figure 1: Chief Phil Fontaine and Prime Minister Stephen Harper, June 11, 2008.

Note: The image of Phil Fontaine speaking the house of parliament, wearing his ceremonial head-dress, was the most common image to accompany national and international coverage of the apology (Canadian Press Photo).

The media continually pointed out Fontaine’s important role in the apology process - highlighting his status. In an article for MacLean’s, Nancy MacDonald (2008)
even argues that this “chapter” of our history would have remained “buried” had it not been for Fontaine, rightly stating that, at the time of the interview with Barbara Frum (Frum and Fontaine, 1990), very few people outside of the aboriginal community were aware of the extent of the abuse that had occurred in the residential schools. Saskatchewan historian J.R. Miller claims that Fontaine’s confession opened the “floodgates” on the issue, stating that when someone as prominent as Phil Fontaine spoke about his experience, others were encouraged to do the same (MacDonald, 2008). In the articles analyzed, no other person besides Harper was cited as often as Fontaine, affirming his role as king-for-a-day. But as Turner (1969) notes of rituals of status reversal: “[n]ot only do they reaffirm the order of structure; they also restore relations between the actual historical individuals who occupy positions in that structure” (p.177). In this manner, they restore communitas and structure (p.178), as, after the apology, Harper returned, stronger than ever, to his position as totem leader.

**The Denouncer**

Garfinkel (1956) argues that it is critical that the denouncer at humiliation rituals be regarded as a public embodiment of the community, making its values salient (p. 423). Moreover, it is of critical importance to the success of the degradation ceremony that the denouncer must not be seen to be speaking in his own interests “that he may have acquired by virtue of the wrong done to him”; rather, he must speak according to the values of the community. If the denunciation were only to come from the aboriginal community, the offended affiliative group, the ritual would have failed because these denouncers could have been seen as only acting in their own self-interest. In addition, Garfinkel argues that “the denouncer must get himself so defined by the witnesses that they locate him as a supporter of these values”. As noted in the Introduction to this work, Harper (2008) acknowledged Layton’s critical role in the apology process in his preamble to the apology. The press repeatedly reported that many people within and outside of the aboriginal community expressed their appreciation of then-NDP leader Jack Layton’s denunciation of the residential school system and Canada’s colonial past. The Aboriginal Peoples’ Television Network highlighted Jack Layton’s role in the apology process, quoting Stephen Harper as saying, “For the past year and a half, he [Layton] has spoken to me with regularity and great conviction on the need for this apology… His advice, given across party lines and in confidence, has been persuasive and has been
greatly appreciated” (Barrera, 2011, May 1). Though aboriginal people are not always portrayed in the media as upholders of enlightenment values of equality and human rights, Jack Layton, though he may have been accused of naive idealism, was always framed by both the media and other members of the totem domain in Canada as a defender of these core values, as was evident during the apology process and highlighted again in the media tributes to him upon his death and his state funeral. Thus, Layton was the perfect denouncer as the harm was not done directly to him, but rather, to the values that he represented.

4.1.4. The Power to Heal

Canadian journalist, novelist, playwright, and critic Rick Salutin’s (June, 13, 2008) article “Issues of Apology and Power”, published on the independent, alternative website rabble.ca, is the only article analyzed which discusses the power one gets from apologizing. He notes that “there was… a smug sense on the part of the apologizers… a cheer-leading air to Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl, like a coach before the big game: “It’s going to be a great apology.” This cheerleading comes from the fact that the party members understood that the apology gives strength to the apologizers by granting them the power to “heal”. Like the ancient myths where the hero offers himself as a sacrifice and then recovers to become a shaman (Dayan and Katz, 1992, p. 41, 44, 45), one of the key characteristics of figures who die for a cause, such as martyred saints and even Christ, is that they gain the ability to heal. As Salutin holds a Master’s Degree in Religion from Columbia University, unlike other journalists writing on the issue, he is probably more aware of these narratives, and theories such as Burke and Girard’s scapegoat mechanism which gives healing power, even divinity, to the scapegoat.

But, as Metis English professor Jo-Ann Episkenew boldly states: “Healing does not imply that Indigenous people are sick [...] Colonialism is sick... [a]lthough Indigenous people understand their need to heal from colonial trauma, most settlers deny that their society is built on a sick foundation and, therefore, deny that it requires a cure” (p. 11; cited in Henderson and Wakeham, 2009, p. 16). While we cannot argue that the rhetoric of healing most often portrays natives as the ones who need to be healed with the settler-state being endowed with the power to heal, at least the re-covenanting narrative
recognized that something was wrong with the settler-state, which needed to be cleansed through sacrifice.

4.1.5. **Catharsis**

As noted in the previous chapter, much of the apology process rests on the belief in words as medicine. In *Attitudes Towards History* Burke discusses how words can have both homeopathic and allopathic functions (cited in Woods, 2009, p. 4). Allopathic medicine seeks to cause symptoms opposite of the symptoms of the disease such as reducing a fever by taking an aspirin. In contrast, homeopathic medicine seeks to treat by administering a small dose of something which causes similar symptoms of the disease. Whereas allopathic medicine would use humour in the face of tragedy, homeopathic medicine recognizes the healing power of the dirge or lament (cited in Woods, p. 4) or, in this case, apology accompanied by a list of abuses and harm done.

One of the most important homeopathic medicines/rituals in this metaphor of words as cure is that of catharsis - which the Greeks saw as a medicinal purification. In his essay on Shakespeare’s tragedy *Othello*, Burke writes that “a synonym for katharma was pharmakos: poisoner, sorcerer, magician; one who has been sacrificed or executed as an atonement or purification for others; a scapegoat. It is related to pharmakon: drug, remedy, medicine, enchanted potion, philtre, charm, spell, incantation, enchantment, poison” (1954, p. 153; quoted in Woods, 2009, p.3-4): the scapegoat and the medicine are inseparably intertwined in the notion of catharsis. As opposed to more common Freudian recognitions of catharsis as a personal psychic cleansing, Aristotle saw catharsis as civic cleansing. In the introduction to the Loeb Classical Library edition of *The Poetics*, the editor writes that, in Plato’s’ view of tragic purgation “[t]he soul, like the body, needs an occasional purge. Pent-up emotion is apt to explode inconveniently. What the citizens need is an outlet such as dramatic poetry conveniently supplies” (Fyfe, 1939, p. xiii; quoted in Burke, 1959, p. 354). In present times, political apologies can be seen as serving a similar function to these dramatic forms of catharsis which Aristotle believed helped keep social frustration at bay. Those who are complaining about bad treatment can be appeased, at least temporarily, with the catharsis of the apology process.
Burke (1959) writes that there is interchangeability in the terms for physiological and political purgation; political pollution might be referred to as a “plague” and the “cure” might be enacted through “the imitation of a divine person suffering superhuman tortures” (p. 339). Burke explains that “when catharsis attains its full poetic statement… its terminology may also be expected to re-enact…bodily analogues” (p. 309). We can see this in the many bodily references in the articles analyzed most notably the repeated references to tears and crying in media coverage of the event. Le Devoir’s retelling of the ceremony highlights a residential school survivor “bursting into tears (a eclate en sanglot (translation mine)” (Castonguay, 2008). The press repeated showed images of people crying, particularly of native women crying, such as that in Figure 2. Other articles, combined images of blood and tears with the emotion of the event and its cathartic healing power, such as the article from the Star Phoenix which stated, that Phil Fontaine, “lost his composure when he said ‘memories of residential schools sometimes cuts like merciless knives at our souls. This day will help us to put that pain behind us.’” Such statements highlight how catharsis can be seen as healing by enabling a group with grievances to move forward.

![Native woman crying at apology ceremony](image)

*Figure 2: Native woman crying at apology ceremony*

Note: One of the many images of the physical manifestations of catharsis displayed in the media (Mike Dembeck/Canadian Press).

Perhaps nowhere was the cathartic nature of the ceremony more evident than on the front page of Canada’s largest national paper, The Globe and Mail, the day after the apology. The opening paragraphs generate, perhaps even exaggerate the cacophonous,
cathartic excitement of the event for the reader: “Prime Minister Stephen Harper had yet to utter a single word of Canada’s apology to former Indian residential school students when the cheering began. Native drumming and shouts turned to loud, simultaneous clapping. Raw emotion bursting for an apology decades overdue” (Curry & Galloway, 2008). Other articles mentioned the tissue boxes which “were frequently reached for” (Atkinson, 2008). Two years later, at the first national gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Winnipeg in June 2010, the “Sacred Fire” was lit. During subsequent events, “tissues of tears” have been collected at the end of the Hearings and are burned in the sacred fire (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011) marking the end of the cathartic period.

In his study, *Aeschylus and Athens*, classicist and Marxist philosopher George Thompson suggests that tragedy can symbolically resolve civic discord in a manner such that it is never actually transcended (cited in Burke, 1972, p. 14). Based on my analysis of the media coverage of the event, there was much more symbolic resolution to the pain than talk of dealing with the legacy of the residential schools: very little mention was made of follow-up action compared to the many references which were made to the cathartic release of emotion. A few of the articles even made skeptical references to the cathartic nature of the apology. An editorial in *The Vancouver Sun* stated that, “while expressions of regret can be cleansing and cathartic, they can also become gratuitous and inspire cynicism in the broader community” (Yaffe, 2008). As Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase have argued, individual catharsis and validation of the survivor testimony is not “sufficient to draw the picture of the truth of Indian residential schooling” (quoted in Henderson and Wakeham, 2009. p. 14) and could be, in fact, an impediment to real justice. The catharsis hides the fact that, like the Greek cycles of drama which were repeated every year, the apology is only part of an unending cycle of re-covenanting which has yet to address the systemic issue of colonialism.

4.1.6. **Splitting the Sinning Nation from the Cleansed Nation**

As discussed in the previous chapter, pollution of the totem necessitates the main ritual of totem regeneration: the polluted totem must die in order to be reborn, cleansed. The process of totem regeneration strengthens both the unity of the
community and its identity. As Jeffrey C. Alexander (2003) notes in his Durkheimian analysis of the Watergate scandal, in order for a crisis to be considered worthy of the totem sacrifice necessary for the process of renewal, the event must be considered not only polluting, but to have polluted the very centre of the society: the totem itself. Certainly this is the case with the scandal of the residential schools. Though, as aboriginals, the students belonged to the affiliative domain, the teachers and overseers hailed from the totem domains of the church and government; hence, the pollution had entered the centre and infected the totem of Canada itself. Once the pollution had infected the totem of Canada, it had to be ritually killed in order to be purified and regenerated.

Yet how do we sacrifice the polluted totem without killing its seed, so necessary for regeneration? Just as Goffman (1971) argues that in everyday life we split ourselves into parts in order to reduce the responsibility that we must take for our actions and to gain audience sympathy, in some manner the polluted totem must be separated from the core community beliefs that it embodies in order for continuity to be maintained. As Ignatief eloquently noted that “simultaneity... is the dream-time of vengeance” (p. 186; quoted in Griswold, 2007, p. 192), and Arendt (1958) noted how forgiveness can save us from the “predicament of irreversibility” (p. 237) by cleansing the present of the past, Dayan and Katz argue that the transformative ceremony organizes time into two sections: pre and post ceremony (p.161). The time before the ceremony is reified and killed as the ceremony marks a return to the society’s true identity before it was polluted (Alberoni; cited in Dayan and Katz, 1992).

In his study of inter-state apologies, Shiping Tang (2011) notes that national myths often serve to divide abhorrent parts of a country’s history from its national essence. He gives the example of the 20th century liberal Italian philosopher and politician Benedetto Croce’s attempt to propagate the myth that fascism was “a parenthesis in Italian history and an external virus that had penetrated its [Italy’s] healthy historical body”; the myth, instead, put forward the notion of “the biennio [the resistance of Nazi occupation from July 1943 to April 1945 in German-occupied northern Italy] as the true fact of Italian national identity”(Fogu; cited Lebow, Kansteiner, and Fogu; all cited in Tang, p. 735). Along these lines, Australian sociologist and activist Danielle Celermajer (2009) argues that modern national apologies seek to separate the past
state of the nation, the sinning-nation, from its current state, its essence. She illustrates this with examples from national apologies such as Chirac’s statement that the Vichy period was “an insult to our past and our traditions” (quoted on p. 21). The new national identity is made stronger in its juxtaposition with the wrongdoing nation. Just as, through myth the ancient Israelites sought to separate themselves from their idol-worshipping past and propagate their essence as a god-fearing nation, the apology helps define Canada-present as existing in accord with The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in juxtaposition to its racist, discriminatory past. There is a sense that in order for healing to occur, we must “put the events of the past behind us” (from the website of the TRC; cited in Henderson and Wakeham, 2009, p. 14). Two separate totems have emerged from the formerly unified Canada: the polluted Canada-past, and the pure, regenerated Canada-present.

We see this ideological separation between Canada-past and Canada-present in Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology with his repetitive use of time denoting words and phrases.

*Today,* we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country…

the government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools were profoundly negative…

We *now* recognize that it was wrong to separate children…

We *now* recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children.

We *now* recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled [italics added].

(Harper, 2008,“Statements by Ministers,” para. 11 -26 )

Stephen Harper (2008) stresses this separation even more by stating that “There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential School system to ever again prevail.” The totem of Canada-past cannot be allowed to live.
The language used in the coverage of the apology, of “moving forward” from a “sad chapter” not only echoes both Chirac’s statements but countless other leaders who attempt to separate their ideal nation from historically regrettable periods through segmentation, such as Bill Clinton’s 1998 description of slavery as “one of the most difficult chapters” in American history (quoted in Craemer, 2009, p. 278). In fact, Harper’s reference to the residential school era as a “sad chapter” (Atkinson, 2008; “Government of Canada Asks Forgiveness,” 2008; “PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter,’” 2008; “Residential School Apology”, 2008) was the most quoted specific phrase in all of the articles analyzed. The record seems to be skipping with British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell citing a “tragic chapter in our history [emphasis added]” (Atkinson). Other members of the totem domain such as then-opposition leader Stephane Dion joined the totem leader, Stephen Harper, in separating the Canada-past from Canada-present by stating that the apology referred to “a past that should have been completely different” (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter’, 2008) while Jack Layton almost directly repeated Chirac’s reference to the Vichy period by calling the time of the residential schools “one of the most shameful eras of our history” (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter”). Even members of the offended, affiliative domain joined in propagation of the division between the totems Canada-past and Canada-present, as Phil Fontaine referred to the era of the residential schools as a “dreadful chapter” in our past (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter”).

Media commentators were also keen to use this phrase and thus disseminate the notion of the separation of the past, sinning nation from its present, essential state. In his live coverage of the event, one of Canada’s most celebrated anchormen (and now Conservative senator), Mike Duffy (2008), described the residential school era as a “black part of Canadian past history” while the editorial the day after the apology in The Montreal Gazette referred to “a dark chapter” in our history (“Apology is the first step”, 2008). This theme is also evident in the references to past wrongs and historical injustices, particularly in terms such as “dark past” which highlight how different a time and place it was then, than Canada is now (“Residential School Apology Resonates,” 2008).

Similarly, many media commentators on the apology noted that attitudes now are different than they were in the past, during the “sad chapter.” After explaining how Trudeau’s government did not even entertain the idea of an apology when issuing the...
red paper, Duffy simply states, “[h]ow things have changed.” We can also see this in repeated references to past wrongs and injustices such as the Angus Reid Poll which asked Canadians if they thought the government should apologize for “past unjust treatment” of native people (Harper will issue long-awaited apology, June, 2008), as though there is nothing wrong with how they are being treated now.

Similar turns of phrase were repeated in the French language press as *Le Devoir* referred to “une page somber de l’histoire canadienne” and “turn[ing] a dark page” (my translation) in our history (Castonguay, 2008). *Le Devoir* quoted Stephane Dion as saying that, with the apology, we came face to face with “one of the darkest chapters” [my translation] in our history (Castonguay). In his Interim Report for the TRC, even Justice Murray Sinclair, a member of the affiliative domain himself, refers to the “une triste episode” (Pensionnats autochtones - Après les abus, la redemption, 2012). They fail to mention that, time-wise, this “chapter” encompassed almost 90% of Canada’s history as a nation. Moreover, it is a disavowal of the fact that Canada, past and present, may simply be a racist society; instead, such statements support the narrative that it is only this era of our history, and not Canada as a whole which needs to be the scapegoat ready for sacrifice. Only the past, sinning nation need be killed, leaving what is newly defined as the essence, for regeneration. The totem of Canada can be resurrected from the seed, now purified of its sinning “chapter”.

Despite some of their leaders such as Phil Fontaine and Murray Sinclair using this language, not all natives were happy with the rhetoric of a “sad chapter”, and the media recognized this. An article from *The Globe and Mail* article quotes Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs as saying, “I’m a little disappointed[Mr. Harper] called it a ‘sad chapter’ because it doesn’t really show the depth of the tragedy for so many of our people” (Atkinson, June, 12, 2008). Not everyone agreed with the framing of the residential school era as belonging to a past, sinning nation and not the essence of Canada.

In a similar, yet more cynical take on apologies, Erving Goffman (1972) states that, “apologies represent a splitting of the self into a blameworthy part and a part that…dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule” (pp. 113-114; cited in Smith, 2008, p. 63). In a collective rather than an individual sense, this is the
objective of the political apology. But, rather than just dividing a nation into a sinning past and a cleansed present, the history of the nation is divided into a past sinful chapter and a national essence which encompasses the idealized past, the present and the future. This essence of the nation is made clearer in juxtaposition with the offense and the harm it has caused to society. One of the most frequently used elements in all of the articles analyzed, was the word abuse. After discussions of the abuse, Stephen Harper’s sentiments that, “There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential School system to ever again prevail” and that this “policy of assimilation… has no place in our country [emphasis added]” (e.g. “A Long-Awaited Apology”, 2008; “Canada’s Expression of Sorrow”, 2008; Fiddler, 2008; “Government of Canada asks for Forgiveness,” 2008, “PM cites ‘sad chapter,” 2008) reinforce the contrast of the essential humane nation, with the abusive nation.

One striking difference between the aboriginal and alternative presses and the more mainstream was the complete absence of the notion that the residential schools were part of the framework of colonialism. This fits in well with the frame presented by the government and the mainstream press that the residential schools were a “sad chapter” and not part of a larger narrative. As Henderson and Wakeham (2009) note, “[t]he absence of the word ‘colonialism from the prime minister’s apology enables a strategic isolation and containment of residential schools as a discrete historical problem of educational malpractice rather than one devastating prong of an overarching and multifaceted system of colonial oppression that persists in the present” (p.2). Some have pointed out that the real risk in separating the nation in this manner is that it fails justice. As Henderson and Wakeham note, if the populace believes “the state’s strategic formulations of it [the residential school system] as an isolated error in educational policy” then we will never be able to “reject a naive progressivist model of history that ‘views this past and its violence as, in fact, past, and so, no longer pertinent to a present practice of justice’ (Baucom, p. 305)” p. 14). The re-covenanting process is seen to wipe to slate clean even though the realities of ongoing colonialism have not been acknowledged.
4.1.7. **Rebirth**

To this point, my analysis of Stephen Harper’s apology and its media framing has discussed the point at which the Transgression entered the popular conscious (via the media) and the process of the Sacrifice of the totem leader via humiliation through public apology. This has revealed the first stages of the cycle of re-covenanting in that there was an established order which was violated and a sacrifice occurred to cleanse the nation of that violation. This next section deals with the final phase of the cycle: the restoration of the order via the redefinition and rededication of the covenant.

**“A New Dawn”**

Hannah Arendt boldly claimed that because of the plurality of human existence, our actions inescapably become part of the complex network of others’ actions and thus their consequences become unknowable (Young-Bruehl, 2009, p. 52). Arendt (1958), notes that whenever we act, we are at risk of becoming “guilty” of consequences of our action which we “never intended or even foresaw” (p. 223); yet, through the possibility of apology, we are able to mitigate this frightening prospect via the “possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility” (p.237). Apology and forgiveness allow us to symbolically undo the past. Eliade eloquently states that in confession and regeneration, “[man] recovers the possibility of definitively transcending time and living in eternity. Insofar as he fails to does so, insofar as he “sins”, that is, falls into historical existence, into time” (1965, p. 157). Just as Arendt (1952) saw that apology and forgiveness hold the possibility of undoing the past, Eliade saw that thanks to confession and regeneration, humanity can retain “the freedom to annul [its] faults, to wipe out the memory of [its] ‘fall into history’ and to make another attempt to escape definitively from time” (p. 158). The press recognized this amazing ability of the apology; an article from the Toronto Star from the day after the apology explicitly stating that, “the backward approach to moving forward is inseparable from Ottawa’s day of atonement” (Travers, June 12, 2008) -- time travel to achieve at-one-ment of the nation.

Because, as Arendt (1958) argues, forgiveness is the only action which occurs without the provocation of the past, in what Arendt refers to as a “world-rupturing” or “delimiting” moment, forgiveness brings the processes of interaction caused by the initial wrongs to an end and facilitates the possibility of new beginnings. In the articles
analyzed, the apology for the residential schools was repeatedly referred to as a “historic” event (“A Long-Awaited Apology,” 2008; “Canada’s Expression of Sorrow,” 2008; Fiddler, 2008; “PM cited ‘sad chapter,’” 2008), which could facilitate a “new dawn” – (“Fiddler;” “Canada’s Expression of Sorrow”) or “fresh start (my translation)” (“Phil Fontaine Veut Une Discussion Nationale,” 2008). On this point Dayan and Katz’s (1992) theory of media events corresponds with Arendt’s theory of forgiveness: as alluded to in the discussion of the liminal nature of the media event, discussed in the last chapter, the media event, like the apology, is the world-rupturing moment that allows us a glimpse of an ideal future, from what is to what should be intimated in Stephane Dion’s statement that the residential schools were part of “a past that should have been completely different” (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter,’” 2008).

Re-covenanting

In the rituals of totem regeneration, “natalism comes after sacrifice” (Marvin, 1994, p. 277): “the alienating of iniquities from the self to the scapegoat amounts to a rebirth of the self” (Burke, 1962, p. 407). In the last third of his apology, the prime minister moves on to the theme of regeneration and rebirth. He states that the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement “gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership… forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians” (PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter’, June 11th, 2008).

Celermajer (2009) argues that the recent political apologies are “an acknowledgement of a collective failure to live up to an ideal ethical principle and… a new covenant for now and into the future” (p. 247). Just as Israel promised to maintain its new image of itself as a god-fearing nation as juxtaposed to its idol-worshipping past, Canada now defines its essence as a follower of human rights, embodied in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in juxtaposition to its discriminatory, racist past. Though, through the act of re-covenanting, the apology is said to “bring the historical community back into alignment with the ideal community” (Celermajer, p. 35), it is not simply a return to the past, but a rebirth. As Celermajer notes, even for the Ancient Israelites, covenanting was seen as a new beginning and not just a return. She argues that this is evident in the fact that the word for covenanting, teshuvah, is almost always used in its
verbal form, indicating that it was seen as a process, and thus, not a return to the past but the turning to a “yet-to-be fulfilled principle” (p. 35). For the ancient Israelites, as for Canadians, the regenerated totem is like a phoenix rising from the fire, in that it is a new being, separate from the totem-past of the sinning nation.

Though I see the whole process of the apology and its media coverage as constituting a re-covenanting, I feel the need to point out that some of the articles even made direct references to what can only be seen as a covenant with references to “redefining the relationship between First Nations and government” (“à redéfinir les relations entre les Premières Nations et le gouvernement” (my translation) (Phil Fontaine veut une discussion nationale, 2008); as with some of the other archetypal themes discussed in this thesis, the indigenous Canadians cited by the media seemed to be more cognizant of these underlying religious themes than non-aboriginals. On CTV’s coverage of the event, residential school survivor Andrea Curly states that she is thinking of the apology in terms of “treaty belts, wampum belts… the silver covenant chain… things we need to go back to look at the relationship that was to be put there in the first place. Those are the kinds of things we need to look at if we want to go forward” (on Duffy, 2008). We must remember that the common notion of religion as something separate from everyday life impedes recognition of the underlying religious narratives at work in political rhetoric and perhaps, allows those with a different weltanschauung, such as aboriginals, to more easily see below the surface.

Redemption: rebirth of the scapegoat

Six months after the apology, in his article titled, “Residential schools apology deeply moved Harper, changed his views” (Jan, 6, 2009), The Globe and Mail Parliamentary Reporter Bill Curry discusses the transformation of Stephen Harper during the apology process.

The day after the June 11 apology, Michael Wernick, the deputy minister of Indian Affairs, confided to one of his colleagues that the event appeared to have changed the Prime Minister. “I certainly get the impression the PM has had a personal transformation and this may have a substantial impact on his worldview,” Mr. Wernick wrote. (Curry, 2009)
Curry (2009) quotes another Conservative official as stating that, in learning about the residential schools, Harper, “went through an evolution in his own thinking,” and then goes on to discuss just how Harper had changed. He quotes Harper’s former chief of staff and campaign manager, Professor Tom Flanagan, who reminds us that in 1996, as a Reform MP, Harper had argued against granting a posthumous pardon to Louis Riel and that in 2000 Harper praised Flanagan’s book “First Nations: Second Thoughts” which questions native rights and “infuriated native leaders.”

An article in The Globe and Mail two days after the apology (Curry and Laghi, June 13, 2008) states that is was “pleas” from two cabinet ministers, a Metis senator, and Jack Layton that led Harper to make the apology. Like the article from Jan. 2008, this article repeatedly uses the word “moved” to describe why Harper made the apology -- suggesting a change in his emotions, if not his character. The article states that Harper’s decision to make the apology was prompted by “a moving and private letter” from Phil Fontaine which “touched a chord” with Harper. Conservative Senator Gerry St. Germain is quoted as stating that, “[t]his brought out the compassionate side of the man.”

Paralleling the fact that, just before the apology, the titles of articles contributed to the humiliation of the Stephen Harper as victim, after the apology, the titles of articles raised the status of the Prime Minister from victim to saviour. The first article in the Canadian Jewish News after the apology, regarding the event was titled, simply, “Apology Praised” (2008). The allusion, consciously or unconsciously, of the title that Harper has been deified through the apology process and is now worthy of worship, is noteworthy from a paper which posts Shabbat times on its front page.

4.1.8. Uniting the nation through the media event

As Benedict Anderson (1991) states, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Yet, by addressing a mass audience the media are able to create and strengthen the “imagined community” with events such as the Olympics (Anderson) or, as I argue, the political apology, which offers a narrative that resonates with the deep cultural myth of all its citizens. Moreover,
as discussed in the last chapter, the scapegoat mechanism is a powerful bonding exercise: along with the *communitas* experienced in the ritual itself, the nation finds a common identity in opposition to the scapegoat and the sins it carries (i.e. the sins of the nation-past), and a common purpose in not allowing these sins to re-emerge but, instead to strengthen the power of the cleansed totem.

From the first rumours of its happening, Canada’s First Nations made it clear that in order for the apology to be valid, it must be a media event which reached across the country. A few months before the apology was to occur, *Postmedia News* announced that Grand Chief Phil Fontaine would accept “nothing short of a significant public event” (“Fontaine Threatens to reject residential-schools apology,” 2008). Just as British reporters were so keen to describe the celebrations of the recent Royal Wedding and American media showed pictures of Japanese fans crying over Michael Jackson’s death Canadian journalists recognized the apology as a media event which occurred not just in the House of Commons but in the houses of all the commoners. But whereas news coverage of international media events such as the Royal Wedding or Jackson’s death stress global participation in the event, coverage of this apology reflected and enhanced feelings of national unity giving a national perspective as newspapers across the country announced the time, date and schedule of events for the live program and reporting on viewing of the apology from all over the country.

In his address to the House of Commons following the apology, Jack Layton (2008), recognizing the importance of the media event which had just occurred, acknowledged both those in the chamber itself as well as those “participating in this ceremony the length and breadth of this land at this very moment… watching at home in gatherings across the land.” *The Globe and Mail*, published in Toronto, chose to reflect the national character of the apology with details of the ceremony being watched at the other end of the country:

as more than 1,000 Lower Mainland natives and their leaders squeezed into The Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver to hear Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology… Elders and their grandchildren sat side by side inside the auditorium, while others stood, all listening as Mr. Harper read his official statement in a broadcast shown on two large screens. (“A Memory Worth Cherishing,” 2008)
Then-Indian-affairs minister Chuck Strahl is cited as encouraging aboriginal groups to hold events “to hear it together” on televisions or computers and is quoted as saying that he expected such events at “between 35 and 40 friendship centres and other assembly points across the country” ("PM to Apologize", 2008). Although the event occurred in the high house of the leaders of the totem domain in the small city of Ottawa, so far from Vancouver, Nunavut and New Brunswick, the media event itself emphasized that common people, even members of the affiliative domain, participated in the event via the media itself.

One of the most common themes in all the Canadian articles analyzed was that of reconciliation and improved relationships between peoples within Canada ("Canada’s Expression of Sorrow,” 2008; Curry & Galloway, 2008; Fiddler, 2008; “Government of Canada Asks Forgiveness,” 2008; "PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter,” 2008). Just as Dayan and Katz maintain that “collective viewing reinforces a shared perspective on reality” (p. 177, quoted in Scannel, 1995, p. 15), the corporately-owned newspaper, The Globe and Mail, repeatedly mentioned how shared viewing of the event on large television screens in major cities brought aboriginals and non-aboriginals together (“PM Cites ‘Sad Chapter,” 2008). What is implied is that participants in rituals become “more committed to shared beliefs and institutions of their respective communities after such participation than they were before” (Etzioni, 2000, p. 47).

Some politicians even explicitly referred to the power of this event to unite the country. Michael Ignatieff, who both headed Harvard’s Carr Centre for Human Rights and, in 1996 spent six months in South Africa making a documentary on that country’s Truth and Reconciliation process, stated that the apology is “not about making Canadians feel guilty, it’s about making Canadians feel responsible – saying ‘Yeah, this happened. And let’s unite as a country and make sure it doesn’t happen again” (italics added, MacDonald, 2008). While perhaps not so explicit, the media encouraged the notion that this was a unified and unifying event with phrases such as the opening lines of the article on the apology from the Kamloops Daily News which stated that “there was a strong national consensus” on what the apology needed to be (“Harper got it right on apology,” 2008).
There was also much discussion in the articles of the importance of the apology for building healthier native communities, which would contribute to a more united Canada. For example, Phil Fontaine was quoted as saying that the apology process, the subsequent TRC and funding for native educational and social programs, will lead to “[t]he formation of families and strong communities and a vigorous culture that will contribute to the strength of Canada” (“Phil Fontaine veut,” 2008). The Toronto Star noted that the Prime Minister holds up the apology as “a prime example of Canadian togetherness” and chose to title its Canada Day article on the topic “Native Apology sign of unity for Canada, Harper says” (2008). Indeed, notions of reconciliation and a new relationship between aboriginals and other Canadians was a key theme in almost all the articles analyzed.

Several of the articles also mentioned the importance of the apology process in putting the story of the residential schools on the public record and educating Canadians about the process. Many of the articles analyzed had comments from average citizens stating things like, "it's hitting me today that I know more about black slavery in the U.S. than I do about my own neighbour's abuse in my own country" (“Residential School Apology Resonates,” 2008). The media coverage of the apology pointed out Canadians’ ignorance about their own country, and at the same time encouraged education regarding our history with statements that the apology “was an opportunity for the entire country to learn about this dark chapter in our history” (“Apology is the First Step”, 2008). As mentioned earlier, the Interim Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012) mentioned that the text of the apology should be on display in every secondary school classroom in the country. As Benedict Anderson (1991) notes, in the contemporary nation, we no longer know each other through marriage or direct economic transaction, instead it is through our shared stories that we come to feel that we have something in common and conceptualize ourselves as a nation. Educational campaigns surrounding the apology and the media coverage itself helps to create national stories which serve to unite and create a coherent national identity.

Not surprisingly, in contrast to the mainstream coverage of the event, some aboriginal and French language articles had a different take on the national unity angle to the apology. Whereas the non-aboriginal press continually noted that the media event
brought aboriginal peoples from across the country together, much of the coverage in the aboriginal press stressed that the event brought white politicians together. An article on the Aboriginal People’s Television Network website titled, “Residential school apology rare ‘consensus’ moment during centralized, secretive Harper minority rule: U.S. diplomatic cable,” noted that “up to the point of writing, the only times Harper reached out across partisan lines came when he delivered the apology to residential school survivors and secured an extension to the Afghanistan mission” (Barrera, 2011). Only in war and apology were the politicians able to unite; only in opposition to an ‘other’, either another nation or our own past. The author goes on to point out Harper’s praise of NDP leader Jack Layton both before and during the apology itself: white politicians congratulating one another on apologizing for the acts of past white administrations. Little mention is made of aboriginals and other Canadians acting in consort. Perhaps unsurprisingly the independent French language paper, Le Devoir, did not stress that the media event fostered national unity. Instead, their cover story on the issue states that about 500 people gathered on the parliament lawns to watch the apology on giant screens (Castonguay, 2008). Whereas The Globe and Mail noted ceremonies from across the country, Le Devoir focused on the events as occurring in Ottawa and did not directly mention any Quebec residential schools. The media analysis revealed that the mainstream media were eager to show the apology as a truly national media event, though not directly stating that the aim of the apology was national unity building, this notion was not stressed, though not utterly rejected, in the aboriginal and French language press.

4.2. Missing Frames: What’s Not There

4.2.1. The Totem Secret

If government apologies are really meant to regenerate national totems and foster unity through re-covenanting rather than simply seek forgiveness, then why do we not hear the apology discussed in this context more often? In his discussion of tribunals following mass atrocities, law professor Mark Osiel states that such trials can serve as “secular rituals of commemoration” which help to consolidate national memory but that this collective memory can only be entrenched in a national psyche if the real purpose of
the trials is kept secret. In order for the ritual to work, the secular public must believe that they are for the purpose of justice alone (quoted in Minow, 1998, p. 46) rather than believing that there is a conspiracy of the elite totem domain to keep the real purpose of the government apology secret. Just as Althusser (2008, p. 49) informs us that “ideology never says, 'I am ideological'”, secular rituals do not reveal themselves as such.

Marvin and Ingle (1999) argue that we only place on “primitive’ cultures the inability to distinguish between their religion and culture, yet, a feature of modernity is projecting our own deep impulses onto other cultures” (p.3). They go on to argue that the more textually based a society is, the more likely it is to fail to recognize its own ritual capacity (p. 4). We see our own such rituals of totem regeneration as secular ceremonies, ignoring their religious undercurrent. Marvin (1994) notes that, during elections, members of the totem domains such as the established press and politicians themselves are constantly asking for more substantive discussion of the issues and that this insistence keeps us away from the real themes of “sacrifice, creation and renewal” (p. 269). The American public ate up Obama’s ritually regenerative themes of hope and change yet gate-keepers of the totem such as veteran politicians and political commentators (e.g. Pickler, March 27, 2007) demanded more discussion of issues and less “totem talk” as Marvin refers to these themes. We see a similar pattern in the Canadian media coverage of the apology: the mainstream press tended to stick to talk of new relationships and closure while articles from alternative sources such as rabble.ca -- a website that obviously appeals to the educated reader -- demanded action.

As noted earlier in the case of Harper’s apology for the residential schools, the receivers of the apology cited in the media seemed more conscious of the religious narratives than the apologizers themselves. Perhaps aboriginals, because of their cultural background’s lack of stress on separation between religious and political governance, understood the apology as a religious ritual better than non-aboriginal Canadians. After his apology for Bureau of Indian affairs practices towards Native Americans, the native American head of the Bureau stated that the apology, was “spiritual”, a term that certainly was not applied by the non-aboriginal observers. As earlier noted in Phil Fontaine’s pronouncement that aboriginal stories had stripped the power away from hegemonic racism, many aboriginal leaders and survivors seemed to understand that the magic of words had taken away the power of the powerful.
Aboriginals spoke in mystical terms of the healing which came from the apology. Indeed, Phil Fontaine also stated that the event “testifies to nothing less than the accomplishment of the impossible” (“PM Cites Sad Chapter,” 2008). Fontaine recognized the religiosity of the ritual in its miraculous character. Even before the apology had happened, Phil Fontaine was the only politician to recognize that the apology was more than a political necessity, stating that it was a “moral obligation” for the Prime Minister to apologize (“Fontaine Demands”, 25 April, 2007).

But the most obviously missing frame, the one thing that gives away the secret that this ritual was more than simply a promise not to repeat an action, is the fact that achieving forgiveness seemed utterly unimportant to the members of totem domain including the government and the mainstream media. Psychiatrists such as Lazare (2004) argue that the apology process heals by giving the offended party the power to forgive or not forgive (p. 50, 52) yet do not point out that often in collective apologies, forgiveness is not the goal and therefore, the transfer of power does not happen. Celemajer (2009) notes that most political apologies are not structured in a manner which even allows for immediate forgiveness by the victim. Rather, victim groups can respond after the ritual is completed, therefore not interfering with the success of the ritual (Celemajer, pp. 59-60). Celemajer's argument shows that the government apology does not fit the secular, economic model of forgiveness: the wrongdoer is not looking for an exchange of an apology for forgiveness, or even addressing the victims.

In his work, *The Apology Ritual*, philosopher Christopher Bennet (2008) states that, “a ritual… is an act the form of which expresses the attitude that a participant ought to have in performing it, (think of kneeling in order to pray)” (p.9). As we see, the possibility of insincerity is built into the very definition of ritual. Ritual is designed to foster a desired attitude, but just because this attitude is not actually fostered in all the participants, all of the time, does not mean that the ritual has been unsuccessful. As Marvin (1994) states, “ritual is a group process constructed to work not only with, but in spite of individual acts, including those of the totem leaders.” As long as the participants do not outright refuse to participate in the ritual, it must be granted that they, at some level, accept it. Moreover, as I mentioned in my initial definition of the term apology, I see the fundamental difference between private and public apologies in the importance of sincerity versus posterity. As the purpose of the apology is re-covenanting, then the
actual acceptance of the apology by the victims is a very small part of all that the apology is meant to accomplish.

Some of the articles I analyzed noted that the natives were not to respond to the apology in the House of Commons (O’Neill, 10 June 2008) but this was permitted after some negotiation. Despite this negotiation, some articles still made it clear that natives had no place in the sacred temple of our secular religion. Le Devoir states that dozens of First Nations people “invaded” (“envahi”) the House of Commons. More than the other papers, Le Devoir seemed to stress this, stating that some survivors were “had the privilege (on eu le privilege (my translation)” to have a seat in the house of commons (Castonguay, 2008). Such wording articulates the fact that the commissive act of the apology is committing to a new identity directed at its own group members (Celemajer, 2009, p. 60 - 63), those of the totem and popular domains; the victim group is only part of the ritual in its position as a necessary part of the redemptive narrative. As Roy Rappaport (cited in Mihelj, 2008) argues, for rituals to be successful, all the participants do not have to necessarily believe in its fundamental tenets, rather, their participation is enough. If this were a personal apology, then one could hardly say it was successful if forgiveness was not achieved, but this is not the goal of such a public ritual. The residential school survivors do not need, for example, an official statement of forgiveness, in order for the ritual to have been successful. The very visual participation of native leaders wearing head-dresses and holding drums is adequate to denote their respect for the ritual. The totem is sacrificed and regenerated regardless of the achievement of forgiveness.

Themes of forgiveness and acceptance of the apology, or even any response from a native, were rarely even mentioned in the articles from the public and corporate media whereas this was one of the more frequently recurring topics in the articles from the aboriginal news source, Windspeaker. Articles in Windspeaker frequently noted that healing would resonate from the apology – an allusion to the mystical power of a ritual to affect real-life situations, whereas, in the non-aboriginal press, the issue of whether or not the apology was accepted was unimportant as the magic of the re-covenanting through scapegoating and totem regeneration is not dependent on the affiliative domain’s acceptance of the apology.
As mentioned earlier, there was also a stunning lack of discussion of the residential schools within the context of colonialism. Such framing serves to hide the fact that the apology is part of the cycle of sacrifice and rebirth. Seeing the residential schools as a “sad chapter” removes these events from history and effaces the grander project of systemic oppression which has yet to be eliminated.

4.3. The Narrative

The culmination of these frames of revelation, sacrifice, humiliation, catharsis, splitting the nation, rebirth and unification follow Burke’s (1962) cycle of the rejection of the order, sacrifice, redemption, and return to the order. The result of the frames found in the apology itself and its media coverage is a consistent narrative of totem regeneration via scapegoating in line with religions from around the world. Through the process of totem regeneration via the apology for the Indian residential school system, the totem of Canada, the “redolent symbol... connoting multifold moral meaning” (Alexander, 2003, p.160) was reborn and reinvigorated. The Residential school system had polluted the totem and all things associated with it had been placed on the negative side of the polarized symbolic classification system of the nation. With the humiliation of full admission of guilt and apology, the totem leader was able to sacrifice the polluted Canada-past and allow the Canada-present to emerge and to be associated with the new totem truths of peace, equality and human rights as stated in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and complete the process of re-covenanting.
5. Conclusion

My analysis of the apology and its media coverage revealed several key frames which help to establish and convey the narrative of re-covenanting. After the rejection of the order was revealed and the correct time and place for the sacrifice was established, Stephen Harper endured a ritual of status reversal and humiliation which served as a symbolic sacrifice. His apology delineated a difference between a sinning Canada-past and an essential Canada-present, allowing members of the totem domain to sacrifice the totem of Canada-past and a newly defined essence of the nation to be born. By setting himself up as a surrogate for the totem itself, Harper endured a ritual of humiliation culminating in the media event of the apology which contributes to a new covenant based on equality and human rights. The media played on the cathartic nature of the ritual as well as its national character. In both the apology itself and its media coverage, the humiliation was immediately followed by talk of rebirth and re-covenanting and the totem was regenerated into the pure Canada-present. Through the death of the sinning nation, the totem was able to re-emerge, cleansed, with the reinvigorated essential national identity of peace, equality and human rights encapsulated in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982).

5.1. Reasons for Pessimism

As political scientists Gibney and Roxstrom (2001) note, the majority of state apologies are quite devoid of historical context. In discussing Prime Minister Blair’s apology for the Irish Potato famine, there was no attempt to situate the event within the context of British colonial rule. Similar to my own observations that the apology sought to separate the residential schools from the essential character of the nation, Blair’s apology emphatically portrayed the potato famine as an isolated incident within an otherwise glorious national past and that the “the raw racism that was behind the British policy during the potato famine was also a thing of the past” (p. 933). Beyond what I
have noted as the importance of historical context, Gibney and Roxstrom argue that apologies must also be put in their moral and psychological context; in the case of the apology for the Irish potato famine, there must be some attempt to explain the “mind-set behind colonial rule itself... and some effort to relate this to events of the present.” They rightly note that “this will not be achieved by pretending that wrongs were aberrations, nor by pretending that similar wrongs are not taking place in the present” (p. 933).

Gibney and Roxstrom (2001) argue that if apologizers do not ask themselves why the action was committed, they are liable to commit the same mistakes again (p. 934). And, to some, this is exactly what has happened in post-apology Canada. Henderson and Wakeham (2009) note that documents such as Discover Canada (the new citizenship guide, released in 2009) originally contained references to the abuse of aboriginal children in residential schools, but that these references were excised from the final document (p. 3), perhaps an indication that the apology will not become a part of our national narrative as some had hoped. Seemingly contradictorily, this citizenship guide does include references to the internment of both Ukrainian and Japanese Canadians. Henderson and Wakeham argue that this encourages new Canadians to see the settler-state of Canada as “a nation which has bravely faced up to its historical errors” (p.3); meanwhile, the March 2010 federal budget did not renew funding to the Aboriginal Healing Foundations which was established to finance healing-programs for residential-school survivors and their families (p. 16).

Sadly, we must remember that in Burke’s cycle of order, pollution, sacrifice and redemption, there is no historical progress. The tragedies of ancient Greece had to be performed in annual cycles in which guilt was “processed” but not “resolved” (Burke, 1970, p.236) and the Old Testament is essentially a story in which the cycle of order, rejection, pollution, sacrifice and redemption is repeated ad infinitum (1970, p. 224). Burke notes that, though texts such as The Bible are often interpreted teleologically, we actually read of “one broken covenant after another, and see the sacrificial principle reaffirmed anew” in an endless cycle (p. 217). According to Burke’s entelechial motive theory, humans have a desire to repeat this cycle until perfection is achieved -- which, of course, will never occur (Burke; cited in Scheibel, p. 175). This can be seen in repeated calls for apology even though apologies have been given before (such as Jane Stewart’s apology), because it was not the correct victim. Burke writes that even for those who
believe that a perfect victim, Christ, was finally found to answer the problem of original sin and our supernatural predicament, we will still be searching for victims to blame for our earthly troubles (1970, p. 223).

As discussed earlier, both personal and social cathartic release are forms of symbolic resolution, good at keeping problems at bay, but not necessarily leading to actual resolution. In his 2011 study of the Boeing-Air Force Tanker Controversy, Ross Singer (2011) shows how coverage of the affair created a sense of national guilt which generated a need for cathartic scapegoating. As is so often the case with the scapegoat mechanism, the media avoided promoting a “public pedagogy for preventing additional harm and promoting long-term accountability,” as “coverage focused on tragic conflict within individuals” (p.99). Singer argues that the “tragic form of issue containment suppressed public resistance and meaningful policy reform by limiting and distorting issues for discussion. He adds that this media coverage “combined in a single point of concentrated public attention organized and presented as a coherent story of a classic fall from grace” and notes that in this manner the news coverage reinforced the perception of individual crime as an aberration rather than systemic (p.105). We clearly see this in the media coverage of the apology for the Indian residential school system: the symbolic resolution offered by the tears of survivors contained the issue to a particular ‘chapter’ rather than bringing up issues of colonialism and systemic racism.

We must also recognize the risks of solving problems through rhetoric. Despite his optimism in regards to the benefits of the apology process on intra-national reconciliation, Griswold does point out some examples of how apologies have been used in a coercive manner such as the “re-education” camps in China and Cambodia (2007, p. 181). He also warns of what one commentator has referred to as “contrition chic” that is “a bargain-basement way to gain publicity, sympathy and even absolution by trafficking in one’s status as victim or victimizer” (Elshtain, p. 40; quoted in Griswold, 2007, p. 182). After Harper’s apology, The Globe and Mail reprinted on its front page, that some natives felt the apology was “just a bunch of words” and “too little, too late” (cited in Bergen, 2009): symbolic sacrifice does not feed children or keep you warm in winter. Our failure to fully address these issues in the apology is evidenced in events such as the crisis at Attawapaskat in the winter of 2011/2012, almost four years after the apology.
After then-Prime Minister Tony Blair’s apology for the wrongful conviction of suspected IRA bombers thirty years earlier, The Independent published an editorial stating:

Hearing the Prime Minister say the words ‘very sorry’… reminds us how much easier it is to apologize for something that happened during someone else’s tenure than to regret mistakes you have committed yourself. How about an equally public apology to the people of this country for taking us to war in Iraq over weapons of mass destruction that turned out not to exist? (quoted in Harris et al., 2006, p. 726)

As Girard (1977) argues, the “trick” of ritual is to transfer blame to someone whose victimization will not bring reprisal (p. 36); blaming former administrations will not bring reprisals to current governments. Like Blair, Harper may have apologized for the sins of his predecessors, but he has not apologized for wrongdoing during his own tenure whether it be for Attawapaskat or Robocalls.

5.2. Reasons for optimism

Some may view this exploration as a cynical analysis of a sincere attempt at reconciliation between two historically antagonistic groups which have been brought into conflict because of colonization. I have been, and surely will be, misinterpreted as seeing the apology as a useless public relations campaign by the Federal Government – but this is not the case. As Robert Ivie (2007) writes “[h]umans, living within language and defined through symbolic action, may hope to reform their identities and relations to one another by means of tragicomic narrative and ritual dramas” (p. 242). When one defines one’s identity anew through narrative and ritual, one is more likely to behave and relate to others in a manner more in tune with that new identity. If, in defining its essence as a humane and egalitarian society in alignment with The Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) through this process Canada begins to act more in tune with this identity, then, surely, this is reason enough to applaud the apology.

Moreover, as noted earlier, the words of the apology are not just useful in terms of their power of self-definition; they are also a useful tool in forcing governments to stay true to their words. The very public nature of the apology process means that journalists
and opposition MPs can use the words of the apology against the government that issued them and force them to stick to the covenant. Moreover, journalists can keep the ideals alive by continuing to cover the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation process and reminding all Canadians of the words of the apology as well as the values that they express.

Though this is in no way an analysis of the success or failure of the apology process, I would like to point out that empirical research supports the notion that, at least in the domestic and civic context, apology contributes to peace and reconciliation (Griswold, 2007, p. 175). In their analysis of ten countries which had attempted reconciliation after intra-national conflict, political scientists William J. Long and Peter Brecke conclude that:

> those countries that reconciled successfully, that is, restored lasting social order, did so through a protracted process of recognition of harm and public truth telling, redefinition of identities and social roles and antagonists, and partial justice short of revenge... An untidy, seemingly idiosyncratic, but undeniably patterned process of national forgiveness was the foundation of successful national reconciliations. (quoted Griswold, 2007, p. 177)

Although the frame of scapegoating, which was revealed in this analysis of the apology and its media framing, is often worrying, Brewin (2011) argues that "modernity deals with the problem of violent sacrifice by displacing it from rituals such as the public execution to imaginary events, with the result that, in the words of Steven Pinker, ‘we’re getting nicer every day’ (p. 20). We can question the sincerity of the apology and fear the frame of the scapegoat, or its ability to create change, but we cannot claim that symbolic death via the humiliation of the public apology is worse than actual victimization of a scapegoat. In a surprisingly optimistic twist, Burke (1989) explains how the "explicit ritual scapegoat" can save us from the deceptions of the “pseudoscientific” scapegoat. He explains that with the pseudoscientific scapegoat, the community projects all of its vices onto the scapegoat, and then takes it to be “scientific fact” that this is the scapegoat's “true nature”. On the other hand, with the explicitly appointed ritual scapegoat, we know that there is “an element of mummery in the process of transference and therefore can discount the notion that it intrinsically possesses these characteristics” (p. 298). Although casting our society’s sins of the treatment of its
aboriginal people on to the symbolic head of the totem then sacrificing him may not deal with the actual problem of systemic racism, it is better than the alternative of blaming natives for their own problems. While using Harper as a symbolic scapegoat may not address land-claims or other economic injustices, it is better than the alternative of using natives as a pseudoscientific scapegoat with claims that aboriginals are an inherently lazy race responsible for their own economic status and social conditions. Though issues of the legacy of colonialism may not have been dealt with in the apology, at least there is increased recognition that the deplorable status of many aboriginals in Canada is not due to some genetic inferiority but rather, at least in part, due to the legacy of the Indian residential school system. Apologies may not be as good as concrete actions at solving issues such as economic disparities, but, at least, they are able to mend old wounds better than mere ignoring or forgetting as they acknowledge the importance of past events on identities (Pettigrove, 2006, p 489). As Pettigrove puts it, political forgiveness, is, at least, “clearly better than nothing” (p. 496).

Although sociologists such as Singer (2011) note that “under a Burkean lens, a public request for a return to normalcy is a logical follow-up to the victimage ritual,” (p.108), does this return to normalcy mean that no social change has occurred? There is evidence that rituals of status reversal do not always merely serve to affirm and highlight the social order, for status reversal can be an instrument for social change (Erikson and Sunderland, 1998). As I argued in Chapter Three of this thesis, ritual can have a reformatory function as its liminality allows us to see a vision of an ideal future, if only briefly. Sadie Hawkins dances, where girls were allowed to choose their own dance partners, can be seen as allowing girls to, at least for one night, play with the idea of liberation from gender stereotypes and thus, in some small way, contribute to female empowerment. Gay pride parades, in which generally degraded and oppressed sexual behavior is celebrated, can be seen as helping to shape acceptance rather than reinforce hetronormativity as strictly Turnerian interpretations of status reversal rituals would dictate. Perhaps allowing Phil Fontaine to preside as carnival king, and allowing aboriginal elders to speak in the House of Commons, if only for one day, did change the moral order, if ever so slightly. Perhaps young aboriginals took inspiration from this aberration rather than seeing its unusual character as reinforcing the status quo. And most importantly, perhaps this one day of the world-turned-upside down created
empathy in the citizen domain by allowing us to hear the narrative of this affiliative domain, allowing it to enter into the grander narrative of what it means to be a Canadian.

5.3. The Necessity of Further Research

It is obvious that the theory presented here is in an early stage and much more analysis is necessary in order to draw conclusions regarding the effects of this framing on the conditions such as race relations and, particularly, the economic disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada. As noted earlier, research into the effects of framing of particular issues such as welfare suggest that it does affect perceptions of issues among the populace, but research into framing on policy decisions is more scare. Theorists such as Iyengar (cited in Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96), note that the “responsibility frame” is one of the most common frames in news media arguing that television news tends to frame issues episodically in terms of who is to blame instead of thematically in terms of complex socio-historical contexts. While Iyengar notes this to be true of US television news in reference to blaming individuals for their own situations (i.e. single mothers for their own poverty), Semetko and Valkenburg found that, in the Dutch press, it is often the government being blamed in the “responsibility” frame.” They argue that this shows that the responsibility frame is highly influenced by the political and social context from which it both simultaneously emerged and is embedded. If this is the case, then the fact that the residential school apology highlighted the government’s role in creating intergenerational trauma among Canadian natives is evidence of this responsibility frame. More research should reveal if this frame actually influenced the political and social climate in of the Canadian government and civil society.

5.3.1. Backlash

Another key issue which necessitates further research, and a major fear among activists regarding public apologies, is that of backlash. Conservative elements in society may react against ‘special treatment’ meaning that, as Lind notes, apologies may actually worsen the relations between victims and perpetrators (Lind; cited in Tang, 2011, p. 716). Lind found that, in Japan, inter-state apologies often resulted in domestic
backlash. This echoes Noble’s finding that inter-state apologies do not always lead to
directly traceable positive outcome but they do generate debate on history and
reconciliation (cited in Tang, p. 739). Lind argues that before apologies can occur,
groups must first reconcile without denying past wrongs. Such suggestions remind us of
the importance of following proper ritual procedure.

In his discussion of interstate apologies, Tang (2011) suggests that proper
educational and media campaigns surrounding the apology can quell backlash. He
points out that the Japanese have never instituted honest educational campaigns
regarding their colonial past and have not been receptive to any apology to Japan’s
wartime victims whereas there have been sustained educational campaigns in Germany
and young Germans have thus been very receptive to public apologies. Tang suggests
that we must address the issue of time in regards to backlash noting that education is
aimed at the next generation so it is only possible to see the impact of educational
campaigns on reducing backlash after ten years at minimum. After such time has
passed, he argues that we must ask: “First, was there an educational reform that
explicitly repudiated the past within the perpetrator’s educational system or was there
merely a whitewash of the crime? Second, how sustained had the reform been?”
However, Tang does not produce any empirical research to confirm his conclusions
regarding the importance of education and backlash and hedges his argument with the
statement that “it is not always so straightforward to identify a causal direction between
events when one looks at them in a longer horizon” (p. 740). Obviously, more research
on the causes of backlash is in order.

5.4. The Future

As Shiping Tang (2011) notes, acts such as the apology are part of a process of
“peace building, not peace in itself” (p. 714). Although the point of this thesis is not to
make suggestions regarding the steps towards reconciliation and particularly not policy, I
would like to point the reader to the work of Apache-American legal scholar William C.
Bradford. In regards to relations between indigenous people in the United States and
non-indigenous Americans, Bradford discusses the theory of Justice as Indigenism (JAI).
He writes that, “JAI commits its practitioners to a sequential process consisting of seven
distinct stages: acknowledgement, apology, peacemaking, commemoration, compensation, land restoration, legal reformation, and reconciliation,” seeing legal reformation as “the capstone in a broader structure of remedies, including the restoration of Indian lands and the reconciliation between Indian and non-Indian peoples” (cited in Buck, 2006, p. 116). He suggests the establishment of a truth commission in America (p. 117) very much like the TRC in Canada. It looks like Canada is at least two-sevenths of the way down this road. Let us hope that we continue on this path through commemoration of apology which allows it to become part of our national narrative (such as placing a framed copy in every classroom), proper compensation for victims and ultimately the settling of land claims and reformation of the Indian act.
References


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Appendices
Appendix A: Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential School

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.
The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons
We are sorry
Nimitataynan
Niminchinowesamin
Mamiattugut

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

On behalf of the Government of Canada

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper,

Prime Minister of Canada
Appendix B: Methodology

Content Analysis of Frame

Frames are notoriously difficult to measure as they “consist of tacit rather than overt conjectures” (Maher; cited in Konig, n.d.). Moreover, owing to their subjective nature, it is often difficult to separate the views of the researcher from the frame itself (Van Gorp, 2005, p.503; cited in Matthes and Kohring, 2008, p. 258). As Gameson states, “We know from years of content analysis that it is difficult if not impossible, to get adequate reliability with such a genotypic category as a frame” (quoted in Matthes and Kohring, p. 263). So how does one go about measuring frames? According to media analysts Matthes and Kohring, it is important to identify the single elements of the frame. They state that these are not words, but “previously defined components or devices of frames” (p. 263). Once these are coded for, a cluster analysis of these elements will reveal the frame itself. Indeed, for Matthes and Kohring, this is the definition of a frame: a pattern of elements which support and generate narratives.

Content analysis of media frames can be approached inductively and deductively (Semtko and Valkenburg, p. 94). The inductive approach keeps an open view to coding a wide variety of frames while the deductive approach pre-defines the frames to be examined. While an inductive method can lead to exciting and unexpected results, it is labour intensive and difficult to replicate. Although the deductive approach can overlook frames that have not been predefined, it can be replicated more easily and is less labour intensive - allowing for more sources to be used - and can more easily detect differences in framing between media (e.g. television versus newspapers) and within media (e.g. mainstream versus alternative). For this reason, I used a flexible deductive approach: I began with set ideas about the frames I was looking for but continuously re-coded for new ideas, terms and keywords which emerged from the articles. I then developed a coding scheme using approximately thirty of these elements. I continued to keep the approach of critical discourse analysis in mind while coding the texts, paying attention to the power relationships at play in the apology, and noting who was quoted in each article and why those individuals and groups were given voice.

Selection of Data:

I began this analysis of the apology and its media framing by selecting media from a cross-section of ownership and region. Although the examination is mostly based on print media, I also include transcripts from Canada’s two major national broadcasters as well as some web-only sources. I attempted to include articles from before the apology, directly after the apology, and more recent articles. I retrieved the articles using the search terms “apology” and “residential schools” (and “les excuses” “les systeme des pensionnats autochtones” in French) on the proquest database and the websites of various media outlets. I included articles from corporate

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16 It may be of interest that I began this analysis coding for Girard’s scapegoat mechanism and it is only after repeated reading of the texts that I re-coded for the elements one would expect in Burke's (1970) cycle as well as aspects of re-covenanting.

17 Although I am aware that there are several computer programs to assist in coding keywords, I am wary of their ability to identify synonyms, homonyms, metaphor and, particularly relevant to this study, political euphemism. Moreover, as the observation of the importance of metaphorical language in heightening spectacle (Dayan and Katz, 1992, p. 108) is key to this project, I did all of the coding manually.
sources such as *The Globe and Mail* newspaper -- Canada’s most widely-read national newspaper, which is published in Toronto and attempts to present a national opinion, and other urban newspapers including *The Winnipeg Free Press*, published in the home of Canada’s largest urban native population. I also examined articles from the non-profit independent news website rabble.ca and one public media source -- the website of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In addition, I examined articles from indigenous news sources including *Windspeaker* – Canada’s largest aboriginal newspaper. I also used articles from *Le Devoir*, Canada’s largest French-language newspaper, as well as several smaller community newspapers from communities with a high percentage of aboriginals. I included transcripts of the Hansard and other articles from the Postmedia website which were reprinted in several small papers across the country. Along with the Canadian press coverage, I examined a limited number of articles from international sources.
Appendix C:
Examples of Coding Scheme

1. Example of Coding from Aboriginal Sources: *Windspeaker* and *Sweetgrass*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Windsp.</th>
<th>Windsp.</th>
<th>Windsp.</th>
<th>Sweetgr.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money Can't Replace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't of Can. Apologizes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't of Can. Asks Forgive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper will issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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### 3. Example of Coding for People Cited in *Le Devoir*

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Appendix D:

List of Works Analyzed


